

## Brooke Mengko - life before Seaforth Vet Hospital

I first went to Indonesia to complete Sea Turtle conservation work in April 2011. The work there was to protect the nesting sea turtles from poaching activity by locals who consume the turtles and the eggs. We would observe the nesting process and relocate the eggs to a hatchery where the eggs would be monitored until they hatched and then they would be released immediately.

During that time, I also worked in a wildlife rescue centre which housed animals that had been confiscated from the wildlife trade by government officials. A wide variety of animals came into the centre such as orang-utans, gibbons, Sun bears, pythons, iguanas, crocodiles, monkeys and birds including cassowaries. Most of the animals when they arrived at the centre were malnourished, unwell, stressed and scared from how they were treated. One of the rewarding parts of this type of work was watching the animals respond to the treatment we gave them; seeing them being able to socialise with other animals is a great thing, as this is what they would have naturally done.

Most of the animals that came to the centre could not be released as they were either taken away from their family group at a young age and did not know how to fend for themselves or, the location in which they were naturally found had suffered great habitat loss due to deforestation.

So at the centre we tried to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

## Happily Ever After

At the end of January we had a puppy come into our care who was very unwell with tick paralysis. We were able to successfully treat him with anti serum and he made a complete recovery. Unfortunately, his owners were unable to care for him further, so he temporarily joined our Seaforth Veterinary Hospital family, so we could help him to find a forever home.

Many of our clients and members of the public (two and four legged) met him during his stay and we thought we would give you an update on his progress.

"Noodle" (real name withheld!) was such a handsome, gentle boy with a great personality, demeanour and clever to boot. Everyone that met him fell in love with his goofiness and we all agreed that he deserved a great new home. We wanted to give Noodle the best chance of being adopted, so he was wormed, given flea and tick prevention, vaccinated, micro chipped and desexed. As he was around 12 weeks of age and so clever, we also put him through puppy class. He did so well in class and made some lovely new friends.

The vets, nurses and receptionists (even some clients!) all helped - taking turns at having him home for sleepovers, walks and play dates. This was excellent socialisation for Noodle (a very important part of a puppy's behaviour education), exposing him to different situations, other pets, children and adults.

Noodle loved our two clinic cats, Benny and Ninja and would want to play with them all the time. Benny became good friends with Noodle and soon they were touching noses. Ninja just put up with him - as cats do!

Buddy? Yes...that is his new name...given to him by his new owners. Don't you love a happy ending! He has joined a family with three other dogs, who he gets along famously with. Buddy is also lucky enough to go along with his new owner to her workplace, where he gets to play with all the other employees' pets as well.



### Inside this Issue

Ticks & Fleas During Winter

Skin Complaints

Sea Turtle Conservation

Forever Home found for pup

Website:

[www.svh55.com.au](http://www.svh55.com.au)

### Consultations by Appointment

Mon - Friday  
9am - 12pm & 4pm - 7pm

Saturday  
9am - 12pm & 2pm - 4pm

Sunday & Public Holidays  
9am - 11am

Open 365 days

### Autumn?

It has certainly started off pretty warm and sticky. This hot, humid weather seems to bring with it some irritating skin problems so I thought I'd discuss a couple of these as well as ear infections. Also I thought I'd touch on fleas and ticks as this last Summer showed some interesting changes...but it's not a reason to get slack about prevention.

We also have an article by Brooke about her life and work in Indonesia and a happy ending for a little (big) pup we met at Seaforth.

### Ticks and Fleas

Over the last few tick seasons we have kept a tally of the number of tick cases we've treated, split into dogs and cats. We've also had a map in the last two seasons showing approximately where all the animals we've seen with ticks live and noted whether they had to be treated or not.

While anecdotally it seems there are just as many ticks out there, the number of cases we had had to treat for tick toxicity this spring/summer dropped dramatically. This was entirely due to a drop in dog cases as the number of cats that were treated actually rose from last year.

Why? The only change from the previous year is Nexgard and Bravecto, so I must conclude they work very well. Now we just need something just as good for our feline friends.

So what's happening now? The number of cases of tick toxicity has really fallen off in March. We always tend to see a few cases over the winter months however, so don't assume they aren't out there. In fact what is out there are nymph ticks. These are paralysis ticks, but in another stage of their life cycle. They don't cause paralysis, but they do cause intense irritation and itchiness to the animal or person upon whom they have latched. The nymph tick is tiny, tiny and very hard to see with the naked eye. I will often confirm that the little bumps on the skin are nymph ticks by looking at one or two little 'specks' under the microscope. Hundreds can swarm up the legs of whomever sticks a foot in their nest. Cats and dogs often come in breathing in a distressed manner, crying or whimpering and biting and licking vigorously. Dogs sometimes chew their legs so badly they almost bite their skin off!

As for the flea...it loves this kind of weather. The flea can be responsible for allergies, hot spots, miliary dermatitis, furballs, knots, tapeworm infestation and even anaemia. Over the colder months we tend not to see too many fleas, but they do continue to live and breed in lower numbers. So consider if you have one male and one female flea on your pet and the female produces 24 to 50 eggs a day and you don't use any flea prevention from, say, March to September. That's 214 days x (24 to 50) = 5,136 to 10,700 viable eggs dropping off your pet into its environment all waiting to develop into adult fleas and jump back on the nearest animal (or human).

Isn't it worth continuing tick and flea treatment year round?



# Itchy Skin and Ears

Some skin problems we often see when it's hot and humid are **Acute Moist Dermatitis** and **Miliary Dermatitis**. Acute Moist Dermatitis, more commonly known as a '**hotspot**', occurs in the dog and Miliary Dermatitis or **Eczema** in the cat.

Hotspots start when something irritates the skin and causes the dog to scratch, bite and/or lick the skin to point where the skin starts to weep. This could be an insect bite (e.g. flea) or sting or the barb of a plant seed or thorn etc. Once the skin has started to weep the fur sticks to the skin and then the bacteria that normally live on the skin are provided with a substrate, (or food), warmth and anaerobic (airless) conditions which they love and can thrive in.

The skin is already inflamed from the scratching, chewing and licking, but once the bacteria start to multiply they cause further inflammation which makes the dog bite, lick and chew at it more. The dog ends up with an area of inflamed, purulent skin and fur that keeps spreading if not treated. The skin can also get a secondary infection with red spots (satellite lesions) spreading out from the original hotspot.

Miliary Dermatitis is a skin condition of the cat where lots of little scabs appear usually around the neck and along the spine down to the tail base. Often the cat over-grooms as well so there is commonly fur loss associated with it.

It is not an infection of the skin, but an allergic condition usually related to the protein in the saliva from the bite of the flea. These cats are highly allergic to fleas so it is often hard to find a flea or any evidence of them. Products to kill fleas prevent the cat from getting fleas, but they can still get bitten by them and keep the allergic reaction going. We can treat the condition, but not cure them of the allergy. Keeping your cat to a restricted area and getting rid of all the fleas in that area is the only way to prevent this condition.



**Acute Moist Dermatitis (hot spot) before clipping reveals extent of irritation**



**Acute Moist Dermatitis (hot spot) after clipping reveals extent of irritation**

## Top Tips for Keeping Flea Numbers Down

Treat pets all year round - heated homes in Winter allow the flea breeding cycle to continue even in cold weather. Wash pets' bedding in hot water or hang in direct sunlight to kill flea eggs. Vacuum at least once a week - to pick up flea eggs and larvae and possibly stimulate more eggs to hatch and be vacuumed up. Vacuum where you pets sleep including on couches and rugs and under beds and chairs. Make sure you empty the vacuum bag each time as fleas can survive in the vacuum bag. Vacuum the car - most pets, especially dogs, spend time in the car so flea eggs will be present here too.

# Itchy Skin and Ears continued...

## Ear infections

Ear infections are very frustrating...for the owner and for the veterinarian and painful for the dog or cat. Certain dogs seem to get infections over and over again. These dogs seem to be predisposed to ear infections by some underlying problem...I'll come back to this. Cats rarely have ear infections, but they do occur. The cause of the infection is either bacteria or yeast. **Yeast** ear infections have a distinctive smell, generally produce a dark, blackish wax and are usually caused by *malassezia* spp. Bacterial infections produce a purulent discharge and smell...well, terrible. Infections can also be mixed so just because it smells and looks like a yeast infection, doesn't mean that's the whole story. We need to swab the ears to find out what's going on. Itchy ears are often a sign of infection, but not always.

**Bacterial** infections can be due to a number of different types of bacteria - staphylococcus, streptococcus, E.coli to name a few, but the worst one is a pseudomonas infection. This bug, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, is not a primary cause of infection. It comes along after something else has started the infection, but the problem is that it develops resistance to many different antibiotics and can pass this resistance on to other bacteria. When we suspect this bacteria is involved (from our swab and stain) we recommend a 'culture and sensitivity' test so we can prescribe the correct antibiotic. It's also important to follow up these cases and make sure the bug has completely gone because otherwise they may increase in numbers again and be resistant to that antibiotic.

## Underlying reasons for repeated infections

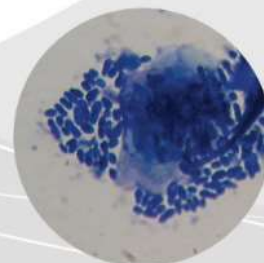
Yeast and bacteria love warm, moist conditions. These conditions are provided by dogs with

- very hairy ears,
- narrow ear canals
- heavy and/or floppy ears
- allergies. Dogs that have general allergies will have ear canals that are a bit warmer than normal due to inflammation. This allergy might be due to pollens or moulds in the air, dust mites, food, plants. These dogs often have brown feet due to licking.
- a history of swimming or being bathed. Dogs that swim a lot or are bathed a lot are more likely to have water in the ears and this helps increase the pH in the ear to a level the bugs prefer and also provide the moisture they love.

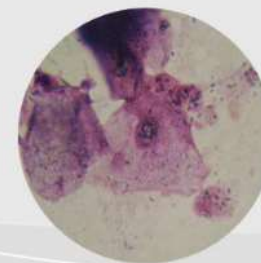
So why does only one ear get repeated infections? This is not always the case - looking through a pet's history we'll often find it's swapped ears, but when it is one ear I suspect one ear might have a slightly different structure to the other or has been changed by the first infection predisposing it to ongoing infections.

In conclusion, when your pet gets an ear infection, we want to see your pet so we can

- 1) identify the infecting organism and prescribe the correct medication,
- 2) recheck the ear/s to make sure the infection has gone and
- 3) try to identify and treat the underlying cause to prevent or at least decrease the number of ear infections in the future. We are not trying to be difficult, we are trying to help.



**Malassezia sp from an infected ear.**



**Bacteria from an infected ear**