



In this edition!

Page 1 - Arthritis, Fleas and Winter housing | Page 2 - Firework tips and Seasonal canine illness

Arthritis in cats and dogs

Arthritis is a common cause of chronic pain in cats and dogs, that can frequently affect older pets, causing degeneration and inflammation of the joints.

Signs are not usually noticeable until the degeneration is quite advanced and are easily missed initially. Each individual pet will show different indicators, and some may not show them all.

Common signs include:

- Slowing down on walks, or less willingness to walk.
- Reluctance to jump or difficulty with stairs.
- A physical limp or stiffness.
- Pacing, changes in behaviour, or low mood.
- Licking or chewing joints.
- Muscle loss, especially around the back end.
- Reduced or increased grooming.
- Loss of toilet training, such as soiling outside the litterbox.

Many treatments for arthritis are available, and each pet may respond better to some treatments than others, so talk to your vet to find the best combination for your pet's individual health situation.

It may take some time to find what works for your pet, and as the disease progresses more treatments may need to be added to keep them comfortable.

Unfortunately, arthritis cannot be cured and is progressive. But working closely with your vet to find the right combination of treatments, and attending regular check-ups, can provide your pet with many years of active life.



Protecting your pet from fleas

Fleas are small brown insects which feed on your pet's blood, and can be caught from other animals, whether pets or wildlife, or by visiting somewhere where there are fleas in the environment.

They multiply rapidly and have a life cycle that involves both your pet and their surrounding environment. They can cause a range of symptoms, from general discomfort and itching to skin infections and anaemia and can play a role in infecting your pet with tapeworms.

You can prevent fleas by using a reliable flea treatment regularly, which is more cost effective and better for your pet's health than dealing with a flea infestation!

If you need any help or advice, or are concerned that your pet has fleas, please get in touch with your local practice for further support.



Housing rabbits and guinea pigs in cold weather

Many owners choose to keep their rabbits and guinea pigs outside, but it's important to ensure that your pets stay warm and dry in the colder months.

Here are some tips for housing rabbits and guinea pigs safely during winter:

- Housing should ideally have some shelter from the weather, such as run covers that can be used to keep the rain off your pet's home. This may mean moving their hutch to a more sheltered part of your garden.
- During the colder months, make sure drinking water doesn't freeze, and provide lots of bedding and fibrous food.
- It is important to cover any housing with a blanket or quilt and waterproof materials when temperatures drop - while also leaving space for ventilation.
- Where possible, you should also consider between-wall insulation for rabbit and guinea pig housing to prevent extreme fluctuations in temperature.
- In extreme weather conditions, you should also consider bringing pets indoors.

Get in touch with your local practice to learn more about caring for pets in cold weather.



Top tips for keeping your pet calm during firework season

Prepare in advance

- Speak to your vet as early as possible about managing anxious pets and the season.
- Use the run-up period to familiarise your pet with dens or hiding spaces.
- Ensure your household is consistent in managing any stress your pet might have.

Provide somewhere to hide

- Provide a hideout area where your pet feels safe and won't be disturbed.
- Safe spaces include dens made by covering crates with a blanket, or allowing cats to hide under beds.
- Familiarise pets with these spaces two weeks before expected fireworks.

Use supportive products

- Speak to your vet about managing your pet's anxiety, as there are supportive products and medications available.

Stay inside

- Bring cats and dogs inside just before dark.
- Encourage dogs to go to the toilet before fireworks start so that they can then remain indoors once fireworks start.
- Stressed pets should not be left home alone.

Create background noise and close curtains

- Close windows and curtains at dusk.
- Keep lights on and create background noise by playing music or having the television on.
- Moderately loud rhythmic music with a good beat can help to mask fireworks.

Beware of escape routes

- Stressed pets can behave in unexpected and unpredictable ways.
- Ensure your home is secure before fireworks start, so they don't bolt through open doors or windows.
- Microchipping ensures any escaped or missing pets can be traced back to you and is a legal requirement for dogs.

Consider your own behaviour

- Be aware of your own behaviour, as certain behavioural cues may worsen a pet's anxiety.
- Respond in a calm and passive way, be present, but keep your own behaviour as relaxed as possible.

Provide distractions

- If it's not too distressing, try playing with or training pets with puzzle feeders or treat-dispensing toys.
- Some pets may be too stressed, so don't force it if they seem reluctant.

Plan for the future

- If your pet struggles with stress, think ahead and plan long-term.
- Anxious pets often benefit from year-round desensitisation training.
- Contact your vet or a registered pet behaviourist for further support, and try resources like Dogs Trust's sound therapy tools.



Seasonal canine illness

Seasonal canine illness is an uncommon condition which can affect dogs of any age, breed or size during the autumn.

The cause is unknown, but dogs will have usually walked in woodland one to three days before becoming poorly, and can develop symptoms including vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, tremors and low energy.

Dogs with canine seasonal illness can become extremely poorly and this illness can be life threatening, so it's important that you react swiftly if your pet develops any of the above symptoms.

If you are worried that your dog or puppy is showing signs of this illness after a woodland walk, please get in touch with the practice so we can help.