

# SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS VETERINARY CENTRE


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## OUR VETS

**Dr Bill Beresford** *BVSc (Qld)*

Special interests: Large animal practice especially cattle.

**Dr Charlie Carter** *BVSc (Hons) (Syd)*

Special interests: Cattle and small animal surgery.

**Dr Chris Watson** *BVSc (Univ. Pretoria)*

Special interests: soft tissue and orthopedic surgery.

**Dr Sarah Sutherland** *BVSc BV Biol (Wagga)*

Special interests: Small and large animal medicine and surgery.

**Dr Trent McCarthy** *BVSc BV Biol (Wagga)*

Special interests: Small and large animal medicine and surgery.

**Dr Stephen Laing** *BVSc BV Biol (Wagga)*

Special interests: Cattle and small animal medicine and surgery.

## OUR SUPPORT STAFF

**Barb, Catherine, Alice, Claire, Zoe, Steph, Candice, Kayleigh, Hayley & Denise**

Our staff are eager to help you with your appointments, food supplies and any other questions you may have about the care and welfare of your pet.

Our clinic has a full range of Royal Canin and Ivory Coat pet foods. We also stock locally made dog coats, Molly Mutt Beds, Fuzzyard dog beds and shampoos and Rogz collars and leads.

## CLINIC HOURS

The clinic can be contacted:

**Weekdays:** between 8:30am & 6:00pm

**Saturdays:** between 8:30am & 12:00noon

**Sundays:** now open 10:00 – 11:00am

**Consultations are by appointment**

## AFTER HOURS

After hours emergencies – at night, on weekends and public holidays – will be attended by the rostered Vet from this practice. Call our number and this will be diverted through to the duty vet on call. If we are attending another call we may not answer, but please leave a message and we will ring you back as soon as possible.

# YOUR VET

**FREE!!  
TAKE ME HOME**



**WINTER 2018**

## What to expect from a **Maine Coon?**

Three in ten Australian households have a cat, but did you know there's more on offer than the traditional moggy? In fact, the exotic Maine Coon is fast becoming a family favourite.

Maine Coon cats are one of the gentle giants of the cat world. Officially known as the cat of the state of Maine in the United States, they are a hardy and robust cat that naturally evolved to withstand the often-intense winters in the Northeast of the US. These conditions ultimately led to a cat that is not only an avid hunter, but also large and fluffy, and an excellent house pet.

Maine Coons are distinctive and considered to be one of the most popular exotic domestic cats to own. However, if you're considering adding a Maine Coon to your family, choosing just one is the hard part as they definitely stand out from the average household cat. Their ears are tufted, they have a dog-like personality, and they are much larger than the average family cat.

Unlike traditional housecats that are often limited to variations of tortoiseshell, black, white, tabby, and ginger, Maine Coons come in a range of colours to suit the fussiest of pet owners. While you do have the option of those more familiar moggy colours, with tabby being the more popular choice, there

is also an abundance of blue, black, cream, and white cats to suit those who want theirs to stand out from the rest.

If you've decided that a Maine Coon is the cat for you, doing your research and talking to your vet are good first steps to take. It can be deceiving when you receive them as a kitten to think they will become a standard sized cat. However, the average weight of a male is around eight kilograms, while a female is approximately six kilograms. Once fully mature from three years of age, a Maine Coon can often weigh anything between five and ten kilograms.

Maintenance is also another thing to consider. As they have long, thick fur that originally saw them through the bitter Maine winters, they do require combing at least twice a week. Starting this process from a young age will help them adjust to regular grooming sessions. However, you will most likely find that their docile nature enables you to groom them with minimal hassle, anyway.

Be ready to do your research if you believe an exotic cat such as a Maine Coon may be for you. Their needs can often be greater than the average moggy, and it is worth having a discussion with your vet to make sure you're as knowledgeable as possible for the new arrival.



The Maine Coon cat (far left) is bigger than your average house cat.

**Take me home to do our COLOURING IN PIC – check inside!**

## Does my pet have conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is a common form of inflammation or infection found in humans, caused by cold and herpes simplex viruses. However, did you know your dog – and even your cat – can get it too?

Believe it or not, your pet can be just as vulnerable to getting conjunctivitis, or pink eye, as the human members of your family.

It's important to note that any dog or cat can get conjunctivitis. Breeds with tendencies towards allergies and autoimmune skin conditions are often more susceptible, but it can occur either as a primary cause – such as a bacterial condition, or secondary to eye diseases, trauma, and cancer.

The symptoms of conjunctivitis are quite pronounced. Your pet might be squinting or blinking frequently, have redness in the moist tissues of their eyes, be presenting with discharge or swelling, or have follicles forming in either eye.

Your vet will first look for evidence of other ocular diseases, before completing a thorough eye examination. Some vets add a fluorescein stain to the eye to highlight any imperfections under light such as scratches, foreign matter, or ulcers, and will also check for anything that could be lodged in their eyelids.

If it's deemed necessary, your vet may complete a glaucoma test, a culture on the eye discharge, a biopsy of the conjunctiva cells, and a skin test should it be suspected that allergies might be to blame. Some vets may also carry out a nasal cavity flush to pick up any instances of discharge, or a dry-eye test, as well.

It's important to take your pet to the vet if it's suffering from any eye irritation. If conjunctivitis is the official diagnosis, you should notice a rapid response to treatment within two to three days and a return to full health within two weeks.



## Take me home & colour me in!



## Cat diabetes – it's a real thing

Approximately 500,000 people in Australia have type 2 diabetes, but did you know that your cat could have it too? It is thought that 0.5-2 percent of the feline population has the condition, and being aware of the signs may just prove helpful for those who are unsure about what is wrong with their cat.

Many cats are diagnosed with diabetes mellitus, the inability to produce enough insulin to balance blood sugar levels. While some pet owners may think the condition is a death sentence, it can be anything but, when managed correctly. Diabetes is more commonly diagnosed in obese cats, but cats in a healthy weight range can also have it. If your cat is drinking more water, is urinating often, or has an increased appetite, pay attention. It may be helpful to take your cat to the vet for a professional opinion and diagnosis of what the problem is. If you fail to do so, and your cat does have diabetes, it may experience weight loss, dehydration, depression, motor function problems, a loss of appetite, coma, and even death.

If a diagnosis of diabetes is made, you may feel overwhelmed by what that means for you and your cat. It's important to understand that while your feline now has a condition that requires monitoring, it's entirely manageable.

Your vet may recommend a low-carbohydrate diet, followed by insulin therapy. They will then carry out urine tests, exams and take note of behavioural signs to design a treatment plan to best suit your cat. Blood tests are taken during regular vet visits, and you may also be required to give your cat insulin shots. Your vet will instruct you on how to do this.

It can seem like treatment is intensive, but once blood sugar levels are under control, body condition has improved, and your cat is on a healthy diet, diabetes has been known to go into partial or full remission for months or even years. It's not guaranteed, but it is possible.

The primary concern for owners of cats with diabetes is whether it can affect their lifespan. While diabetes is entirely manageable, it can shorten your cat's life. Poorly controlled diabetes can be fatal, as can infections and nerve disorders associated with the condition. However, with a daily commitment to treating your cat, there's every possibility it could make it into its late teens, living a full and happy life.

If you have reason to believe your cat may have diabetes, make an appointment with your vet immediately. The sooner you can receive a diagnosis, the sooner your cat can receive help.



## Snuggling up for winter

While winter in Australia can often be milder than in other parts of the world, snowfall and low temperatures are still on their way. While you rug up for the colder weather, how are your cats and dogs keeping warm? Remember, staying warm is equally as crucial for them as it is for you.

Your pets rely on you to provide them with the necessities of life. Food, shelter, and warmth are all vital, and they become all the more critical when the rain and snow start to fall. You can put on a jacket or cuddle up in a blanket, but your dog or cat only has a fur coat that will provide minimal protection

against the elements. Therefore, you need to step in and see that they're sheltered from the weather.

For dogs, there are several things you can be doing to ensure they don't feel the cold this winter. Firstly, allow them to spend as much time indoors as possible. While they may share ancestry with wolves, the domestic dog's ears, paws, and nose are particularly vulnerable to cold conditions, and they aren't able to cope outside for long periods of time in low temperatures.

If your dog is an outside dog, ensure they have enough shelter from the elements.

An insulated dog kennel with a well-sealed roof, plenty of blankets and positioned away from the wind and rain can make all the difference.

If you have a small or old dog, purchasing a coat for them to wear during walks, or on short stints outside, can be beneficial as well. Smaller dogs with less fur and older, more fragile dogs could all benefit from an additional layer protecting their bodies.

Additional comfort is also helpful at bedtime. Provide your dog with an elevated bed to prevent being exposed to a draught, as well as plenty of warm blankets so they can sleep comfortably throughout the night.

Cats are less reliant on you as a species, but they too can feel the cold. You might find that your ordinarily active cat is happy to spend more time inside closer to the fire or heater, and is less thrilled at the prospect of heading outside. If this is the case, it could be a good idea to purchase a litter tray to avoid accidents.

However, if your cat still does like to venture outside, it may still try to seek out the warmth. Provide a warm, sheltered spot outdoors so that it won't find comfort in dangerous areas, such as under vehicles.

The wind, rain, and lower temperatures are on their way, so there's no time like the present to get prepared. While you're busy ensuring your family will be warm enough for the next few months, remember to spare a thought for your pets as well. Consult your vet clinic if you require any advice or tips on how to care for your pets over winter.

## Why opt for an eight-legged friend?

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world, with 63 percent of people housing at least one domestic animal. While cats and dogs are the most popular pet option, not everyone wants or can have one, so how about a tarantula, instead?

If you'd prefer not to have pet hair on your sofa or don't want the responsibility of a high-maintenance pet, you don't have to settle for a pet-less life. Not all pets have wagging tails and whiskers, and there's ample opportunities to consider bringing a pet into your home that's a bit less dependent, and a little more unique. For example, why not welcome a tarantula into your life?

Queensland whistling tarantulas, most commonly found on the east coast of Queensland, are becoming popular as household pets. They can grow to 55mm in length, require minimal maintenance, and have a basic diet of crickets, pinky mice, silkworms, and woodies. If you're still not convinced, we've included a few additional benefits below.

### Females live for a long time

It can be hard to get over the heartbreak of losing a pet such as a cat or a dog. They bring so much happiness to your life and can leave a huge gap when they're gone. With tarantulas, you can benefit from both longevity, and less of an emotional attachment. Females can

live for 15-20 years, and never quite allow you to form the same bond as you would with a dog or cat.

### They are not needy

Not everyone is comfortable with needy animals who require a lot of attention and love, which is what makes tarantulas a popular option. Rather than needing affection, a tarantula is happy to live its life in an enclosure, uninterrupted.

### They are low maintenance

Once you've got your enclosure prepared, a tarantula doesn't require much effort. You don't have to groom it or take it for walks, as it will, for the most part, take care of itself. You will need an enclosure no smaller than 30 x 30 x 30 centimetres with peat-soil substrate for burrowing, hollow logs, caves, and pipes. Tarantulas prefer

humidity, so keeping a light layer of mist on the soil is also a good idea, as is using a layer of sphagnum moss to retain it.

Tarantulas are exceptionally clean and do a great job of taking care of themselves. As such, you only have to remove carcasses of their prey, wipe the glass, and complete a full clean twice a year.

While tarantulas aren't the most conventional of pets, they can suit those who lead busy lifestyles. If you have any questions about tarantula ownership, talk to your vet.



## Can my dog get a cold?

Most people can tell when they are getting a cold. The sniffles start, followed by a raging temperature, hacking cough, and endless dripping nose. But did you know a similar condition exists in the dog world?

Canine cough, often to referred to as kennel cough, is a highly contagious upper respiratory tract infection caused by viral and bacterial agents. While a dog can pick up kennel cough by merely breathing in microscopic particles from an infected dog that passes by on the street, it's more prevalent in boarding kennels.

Even if all dogs within a kennel are vaccinated against kennel cough, it is still the ideal breeding ground for the virus and bacteria. Along with the confined and crowded conditions, dogs who are tired, stressed, pregnant, older or are lacking immunity may also be more at risk of catching this dog-to-dog transmitted virus.

Just as you would know you've had a touch of the flu or a cold by an irritating cough, you may also notice the same symptoms in dogs. A dog with a hacking cough should be taken to a vet, as it is often the first and leading symptom of canine cough.

While some dogs appear happy and healthy aside from a cough, others are known to suffer from other symptoms such as sneezing, fever, lethargy, watery eyes, a runny nose, a lack of appetite, and in severe cases, pneumonia. Just as you would seek medical help for your cold, it's crucial your pooch receives veterinary treatment for his.

In most cases, a dog will fight the infection on its own, but your vet may recommend antibiotics to fight the bacteria, and possibly cough suppressants as well.

Vaccination is not a sure-fire way of ensuring your dog does not contract canine cough, but it's a far more effective option than doing nothing at all. The best prevention method is the C5 vaccination. This vaccine, catered to parainfluenza and Bordetella, should be given yearly by your vet.

If you notice your dog is coughing, has a running nose, has lost his appetite or looks lethargic, seek veterinary treatment and advice immediately. Just as a cold makes you feel under the weather, canine cough can make a dog miserable, and exceptionally sick. Act sooner rather than later.

## IMPORTANCE OF EARLY SOCIALISATION IN PUPPIES

It has been proven that puppies who receive extra socialisation before 6 weeks (by the breeder) and appropriate socialisation between 6-14 weeks (by the owner) were shown to be less likely to have separation-related behaviours, general anxiety, be distracted or have body sensitivity. This is an extremely important issue, as behavioural causes are the leading cause of death for dogs under 3 years of age, not infectious disease or injury as people may think.

Positive early life experiences are critical in helping puppies grow up to be confident and content companions. They need positive experiences with a wide range of different stimuli including different sights, sounds and smell. The sensitive period for socialisation ends at around 12-14 weeks. Therefore it is important to address this issue immediately upon bringing a puppy home.

Puppies who do not get adequate socialisation tend to be fearful of unfamiliar people, dogs, sounds, objects and environments. This can result in damage to the pet-owner bond and result in surrender or euthanasia.

Children often can be seen as 'aliens' to dogs as they act very differently to adults. They are smaller, noisy and often run and move their arms around in an unpredictable manner. They therefore look more like a toy than a person. This can result in children being chased, jumped up on or even bitten. Children should be supervised when interacting with dogs at all times but especially around new puppies as it is necessary to ensure that these first interactions are met with positivity.

Introduction to cats, chickens and pocket pets are important as most dogs will live with some of these animals in their lifetime. Rewarding puppies for calm behaviour when in the presence of these animals is a good start. There is no need 'to force them to interact very closely'.

Exposure to different surfaces is vital ensuring puppies know how to walk on grass, pavement, wood, tiles and carpet otherwise aversions to these surfaces can develop in later life.

It is essential that puppies are exposed to a variety of dogs too. Just one dog is not enough. The dogs need to be different ages, breeds, colours, shapes and sizes so the puppy can learn that all these dogs are okay and how to interact appropriately with them.

It is important to recognise signs of fear in puppies as puppies who are fearful of a stimulus will develop a negative association with that object or event e.g. strange people, other dogs, coloured flags. Signs that your dog or puppy is fearful include; yawning, panting, and licking their lips, cowering or moving in slow motion. These signs can progress to moving away, turning their head away not eating, growling and finally biting if the uncomfortable stimulus is not removed. Be sure to reward your puppy for 'calm' behaviour e.g. when they are resting comfortably on their bed or playing by themselves. By rewarding calm behaviour, we can use it as a training cue in new or frightening situations. We are very happy for you visit our vet clinic with your puppy to encourage positive interactions.

## Change your cat's "scratchy" behaviour

When you welcome a new cat into your home, you can bank on being smitten, and spoiling that cat rotten. What you may not have banked on, however, was having your furniture used as a scratch post. Here's how to make that habit a thing of the past.

Cats just love to use their claws. They use them for play, marking their territory, stretching as they wake, or for kneading when they go to sleep. Sometimes, though, they use them in the worst possible places. If your cat is eyeing up that new leather lounge suite, or it has taken a liking to your drapes, you can use both items and discouragement techniques to modify their behaviour.

Scratch posts are certainly an excellent alternative to your sofa, but it may take some time to find one your cat prefers over your furniture. Try purchasing a variety of different textures such as carpet, wood, and cardboard, and give them the option of both horizontal and vertical posts. Some cats like to

rake their claws, while other cats want to pick – and while your cat might not like the first post you choose, there are others they may prefer instead. Take note of their current scratching technique to select the best post for their needs.

If your cat continually uses the same part of the furniture, discourage it by adding double-sided tape or sandpaper to the area, or by positioning something in the same space to prevent access. Whilst these measures will discourage the behaviour, you can also be encouraging them to use their scratch post by adding catnip and/or treats to it, to make it a more desirable area.

The key is not to stop the behaviour – as scratching is a natural part of being a cat - but to shift that habit to a more appropriate location. Modifying this behaviour can take time, but by making alternative scratch places available, you're already one step in the right direction.



To contact your vet, keep me in a handy place at home.