

# 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 BVBiol (Wagga)

Special interests: Small and large animal medicine and surgery.

**Dr Trent McCarthy** BVSc BVBiol (Wagga)

Special interests: Small and large animal medicine and surgery.

**Dr Stephen Laing** BVSc BVBiol (Wagga)

Special interests: Cattle and small animal medicine and surgery.

## OUR SUPPORT STAFF

**Barb, Catherine, Alice, Claire, Zoe, Steph, Candice, Kayleigh and Hayley**

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



SUMMER 2017/18

## Holiday pet care options

**School's out for several weeks over summer and many families pack up and head off on holidays for a week or two during this period.**

It can be challenging to work out how to best look after your pets while you're away but there are a number of options to choose from.

An ideal option is to take your pet with you. There are many pet friendly holiday houses and camp sites and while camping is easier with dogs, cats can share a house or an apartment with you while you enjoy your rest and recreation.

Boarding kennels are a popular choice for holiday pet care. More and more boarding establishments are making their dog and cat accommodation more like home with beds and televisions in their runs. Always visit the kennels and meet the staff before you leave your pet there so you have peace of mind that they'll be well cared for while you're away.

You may prefer to have your pet looked after in someone's home which is a little more pleasant for them than a boarding kennel. Again, do your homework and ask for references before you leave your much loved furry family member with someone. Visit their property and check the security they have in place – do they keep cats securely indoors and are their fences secure for your dog?

Some animals are real homebodies and are happiest in their own environment. There are two ways you can have your pets looked after in their own home.

Firstly you can have a house sitter stay in your home to care for your animals as well as collect your mail and water your garden. Your

pets will be happy in a familiar environment and will have company too however you'll need to do due diligence before allowing a stranger access to your home.

The alternative is to have someone pop in once or twice a day to feed them, check their water and play with them. This is probably the most cost effective option but there are risks – your pets will be alone for long periods and if they are ill or injured they won't be attended to until the next scheduled visit.

It's important that you're happy with the pet care option you've chosen for when you're away on holiday.

If you are planning on booking your pet into a boarding kennel or they are going to be a guest in someone else's home, they will need to be up to date with their vaccinations and parasite control. If you're not certain if they are current on their shots or if you need a duplicate vaccination certificate, please telephone or call in for a chat with our friendly reception staff.



Take me home to complete our PUZZLE – check inside!

# Support for wildlife in the summer heat

We may think that because many of our wildlife species are native to this country they have adapted to our climate conditions.

Adaptation however, may not be enough during a severe summer heat wave and wild creatures can suffer from heat stress too.

Providing water is an effective way of supporting these animals when it is hot and there are a number of ways of doing this. You can use your hose to mist your garden shrubs to cool the area and make it more comfortable for birds and possums.

This is best done in the morning or in the late afternoon so the heat of the sun doesn't evaporate the water straight away.

Leave water in various sized bowls for native animals to drink from. Smaller species such as lizards would prefer a shallow saucer; other species will drink from a deeper bowl. Place a rock or a stick inside it in case they fall in and need to climb out.

Water containers can be hung in trees for tree dwelling species. Terracotta is a good material to use for water containers because it doesn't get too hot. Place the

water containers in secure places such as under a bush to protect the animals from predators and keep your dogs and cats away from the area.

If you come across an animal affected by the heat, you'll know there's something wrong because their behaviour is unusual. For example, when a nocturnal species such as a possum is out and about during daylight hours it suggests they're not well. Similarly, a tree dwelling koala sitting on the ground isn't normal either. Birds when too hot will breathe rapidly with their beaks open and they'll hold their wings away from their body. In severe cases, animals will be unresponsive and may even have seizures.

It's very stressful for wildlife to be handled by people but these animals need help. Use a towel to gently pick them up and place them in a dark cardboard box. Keep the box in a cool place and call us for advice.

If you do need to bring an animal in to us for examination and possibly treatment, please make a note of where you found them so they can be returned there once they have fully recovered.



## Heartworm disease

The warm weather brings barbecues and the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors without getting too cold. Unfortunately it also brings mosquitos.

These little biting insects are a nuisance to us but can be much more dangerous to our pets. They spread heartworms, a parasite that can cause lung disease and heart failure. While the wide range of preventative products available today mean that heartworm disease isn't as common as it once was, it's still a significant risk to a pet's health and in fact, their life.

The mosquito is an essential part of the heartworm lifecycle. They survive on blood and when they bite an infected dog and drink their blood, they also take up the immature worms. These worms then develop further in the mosquito's body before being transferred to another dog as they feed. Without mosquitos there is no spread of heartworm between dogs.

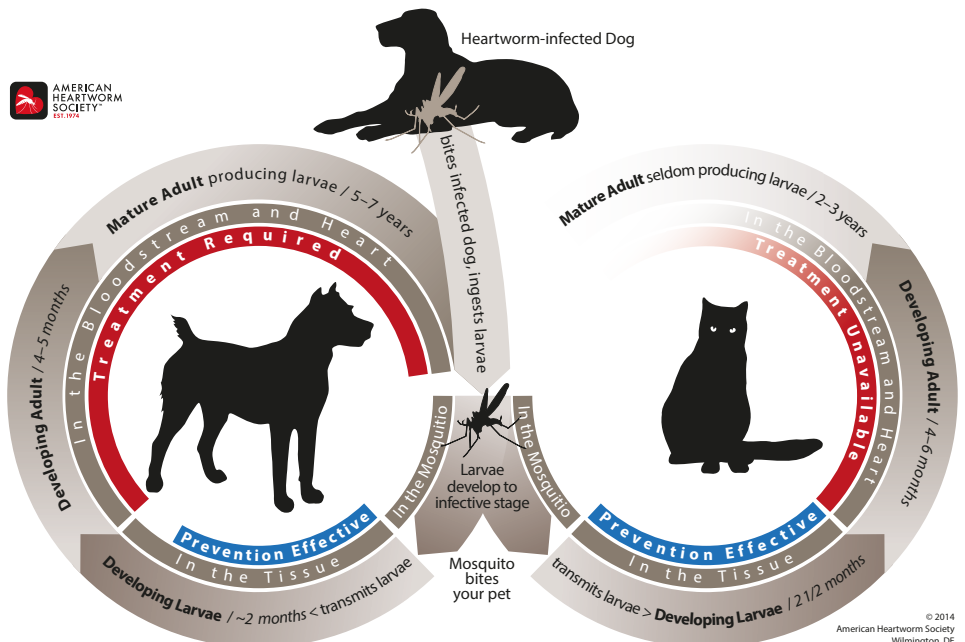
The immature worms grow into adults and make their home in a dog's heart and in the arteries leading to their lungs. It can take several years for dogs to show symptoms of heartworm disease so owners won't notice when their pet first becomes infected. Often the first sign is a soft cough but if the condition isn't diagnosed and treated, dogs develop lethargy, rapid breathing and fluid accumulation in their abdomen. Ultimately they may collapse. Heartworm disease can also affect cats. Again, symptoms include coughing and weight loss. If you share your life with a ferret, they too are at risk of heartworm disease. Heartworm

infection is detected in dogs and ferrets with a simple blood test however it's not quite so straightforward in cats. There are a number of conditions that cause similar symptoms in cats and blood tests are less accurate in this species.

Heartworm can be fatal. Treatment of heartworm disease in dogs can be complicated and for our feline friends, there is no safe way of killing the adult worms. Treatment of heartworm disease in cats is aimed at controlling symptoms. Fortunately there are a number of products that will prevent a pet from developing the disease. These products don't stop infection with the worms but they kill the immature parasites

before they become adults and cause damage to the heart and lungs. Some products just control heartworm while others also kill multiple parasites including fleas, ticks and intestinal worms. If your pet doesn't like the idea of taking a tablet then you may prefer to use a spot on liquid that's applied to the back of the neck.

Heartworm is a serious and potentially fatal disease but it can be avoided. We would be happy to show you the range of products available to control heartworm. We can help you choose a product that is easy for you to use and easy to remember and show you how to use it correctly. Don't let your pet fall victim to a preventable disease.



# Snake bites

As the weather warms up, snakes come out of hibernation and are more active in our parks and gardens.

Dogs and cats are naturally inquisitive and as they enjoy their walk or play in the park they may encounter a slithery reptile. Australia is home to a number of venomous snakes and one study suggesting that over 6000 dogs and cats are bitten by snakes each year. Many bites occur on the face as the animal lunges in to torment the snake.

The Eastern brown snake, tiger snake and red bellied black snake are common culprits in causing envenomation in pets. Symptoms appear usually within 24 hours but it may be seen as soon as just a couple of hours after the bite, and they vary depending on the type of snake. Your pet may show neurological signs such as dilated pupils and weakness in the hind legs which can progress to paralysis. They often vomit and their breathing becomes difficult. They may lapse into a coma. Other symptoms are due to muscle damage and interference with blood clotting. You may see pale gums

or blood in the urine and there may be bleeding from the bite wound.

First aid for your pet involves keeping your pet as calm and quiet as possible. Carry them to the car, don't allow them to walk, and drive straight to your local vet clinic or pet emergency hospital. It's always a good idea to call ahead to let them know you are on the way.

Treatment of snake bite in pets involves administering antivenom to counteract the effects of the toxin. Supportive treatment includes intravenous fluids and pain relief. It can take several days for an animal to recover from a snake bite and many don't survive. Snake antivenom is expensive but fast diagnosis and early treatment usually results in a better outcome.

Prevention is always better than cure and your pet is safer if you can reduce the chance of them encountering a snake. This means your lawn should

be mown regularly and you should avoid having piles of debris or rubbish in your yard. These are ideal places for snakes to hide so if you keep your pet's environment clear they are less likely to startle a sleeping reptile. When you take your dog for a walk, keep them on leash and always be vigilant. This is especially important if you take your dog bush walking or trail running.

If you have any questions about the risk of snake bites in our area, we would be very happy to answer your questions.



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## WORD SEARCH

- ACCOMMODATION
- ANTIVENOM
- BITES
- CAROB
- CHRISTMAS
- CLIMATE
- FAMILY
- FESTIVE
- GUINEAPIG
- HEARTWORM
- HIBERNATION
- HOLIDAY
- HOSPITALISED
- KENNEL
- LIFECYCLE
- MOSQUITOS
- OVERHEATING
- PET-FRIENDLY
- PREDATORS
- PREVENTABLE
- PREVENTION
- RECOVERED
- REPTILES
- SHADE
- SNAKES
- SYMPTOMS
- VACCINATIONS
- VENTILATION
- WATER
- WILDLIFE

## Caring for guinea pigs in hot weather

**Guinea pigs are a popular pet for young children. They are small, relatively easy to handle and have a sweet nature.**

However, these little creatures can struggle to keep cool in warm, humid weather particularly if they're a little overweight or have a heavy fur coat. Heat stroke is a real risk as the temperatures rise in spring and summer. Other circumstances that can contribute to overheating include poor ventilation, no shade and overcrowding. Heat stroke can cause serious illness and death in these little animals.

If your guinea pig is getting a little too warm, you'll notice them panting and salivating. They become weak and don't move around as much as usual. At this point they need to be cooled down or they may start to have convulsions. Emergency first aid for heat stroke is to cool your guinea pig down by bathing them with cool water. When this has been done, call us to let us know you're

coming and bring them to the clinic for further treatment.

Prevention is always better than cure, and it's not too difficult to protect your little pet from overheating. Keep their hutch in the shade and ensure there is air circulating around it. A fan blowing gently on their cage can be helpful for this. If it is very hot, the fan can be directed over an ice brick to blow cool air in their direction. If your guinea pigs enjoy grazing in your yard, then it's better to let them do this in the early morning or later in the afternoon when the sun is less intense. If their housing is moveable, they may be able to be brought indoors to enjoy the air conditioning.

Don't leave it too much longer to work out how you're going to keep your guinea pigs cool when the mercury starts to rise. Forward planning is the key to avoiding heat stroke this spring and summer.



## Christmas feast safety

**Christmas is a time of celebration and of family, and one of the nicest ways of combining these is with a meal.**

Our pets are part of the family and while it's nice to give them treats during the festive season, we do need to be careful. Some of the delicious dinner fare we share can make them very ill indeed.

The risks to our furry family members are there even before we sit down at the table. Our pre-dinner nibbles can have ingredients that are unsafe.

Grapes, raisins and sultanas can cause kidney failure and if pets eat chocolate they could develop vomiting and diarrhoea and even seizures. Macadamia nuts can make your dog weak and they may not be able to walk. They usually recover well but may need supportive treatment until they do.

Cats are often fussier eaters than dogs so may be less at risk, but it's better to be safe than sorry and keep plates and bowls of food well out of reach. If you'd like to prepare a platter of pre-dinner appetizers for your pets, choose treats made from carob and some tasty snacks from the pet store.

Christmas lunch and dinner often includes chicken, turkey or ham. Be aware that cooked bones are not safe for dogs as they can splinter and cause damage to their stomach and intestines. Rich fatty foods can trigger a bout of pancreatitis which is associated with fever, vomiting and severe tummy pain. Some dogs need to be hospitalised for treatment.

The best way to reduce the risk of illness in our pets over the festive season is to avoid giving them people food and instead offer them a special flavour of their regular meal.

Another thing to be aware of is that some alcoholic beverages taste quite good to pets, particularly the milky liqueur drinks. They can be affected by alcohol just as we are, and because of their smaller body size, it may not take much to make them wobbly on their feet and quite lethargic. It's a good idea to keep your glasses out of their reach just to be safe.

Sharing a festive meal is a way of building friendships and relationships and it's great to be able to include pets in our Christmas celebrations. However, this needs to be done carefully to avoid spoiling the holiday season with a visit to the emergency vet.

## NOT ALL COLIC IS CREATED EQUAL

### What is colic?

Colic is a syndrome of abdominal pain that encompasses a whole range of disorders which can be gastrointestinal (gut related) or non-gastrointestinal (pneumonia, urinary tract infection, laminitis) in origin. It is a very common problem which can come with significant economic cost.

The most common types of colic in horses are:

- Large colon impaction/displacement/torsion
- Spasmodic
- Strangling lipoma (benign fatty lump most common in horses aged 12-26 yrs).
- Gut distention (food, gas, fluid)
- Tension on the root of the mesentery
- Ischemia
- Deep ulcers in the stomach or the colon
- Sand colic
- Ileus (not moving ingesta).

The most common presenting signs of colic include:

- Restlessness
- Stretched out posture
- Flank watching
- Attempting to urinate
- Pawing at the ground
- Pacing
- Getting up and down
- Rolling
- Throwing themselves down or against walls

What all these symptoms have in common is **pain**. Therefore, the first thing to do if you think your horse has signs of colic is to call your veterinarian. While waiting for your veterinarian to arrive handle the horse with caution as when horses are in pain they can act unpredictably and may cause harm to themselves or you even if they are normally calm and gentle. Remove any food if possible.

Once the veterinarian arrives they will assess the horse and administer pain relief. Depending on the initial exam results they may elect to perform some further tests which may include; passing a stomach tube, performing a rectal exam, taking a blood and/or faecal sample, getting a sample of abdominal fluid from the abdomen or referring the horse to a referral centre in preparation for surgery. Not cases of colic will receive the same treatment and even if your horse has had 'colic' in the past it won't necessarily respond the same the second time.

Things that you can do to minimise the chance of your horse getting colic include:

- Having access to grazing/forage based diet
- A horse's gastrointestinal tract is designed to always be digesting small amounts of food not 2 meals of energy dense food (eg grain feeds). The GI tract is about 30m.
- Minimising changes to diet, pasture and hay.
- Ensure the horse is wormed regularly or has faecal egg counts done to determine the need for worming.
- Dental health – regular dentals which ensure hay and food is thoroughly chewed.

Events that can contribute to the development of a colic episode can include:

### Change in weather

- Sudden temperature drop can contribute to decreased water intake which can result in dehydration and impaction.
- Cold water results in a decreased intake of water in cold weather.

### Travel

**Diet change** – microbial changes in the gut due to change in feed stuffs can result in gas accumulation = pain

**Foaling** – retained membranes, metritis  
**Change in stabling behaviours/exercise**  
**No known breed predispositions**

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