



Spring and Summer

Here are our hints and tips to keep your pet healthy through spring and summer

Sticks

- NEVER throw sticks for your dog! It is tempting, but many dogs are injured, sometimes fatally, each year by running onto sticks that have been thrown for them. Use a ball on a rope or there are some plastic/rubber sticks available that are far safer. If you think your dog has injured themselves on a stick they must be checked by a veterinary surgeon. Symptoms to look for include over salivating or blood tinged saliva, excess licking of lips, reluctance to eat or drink, coughing and pawing or rubbing at their face.

Heat

- Dogs especially can find it difficult to deal with heat, imagine being out for a run wearing a fur coat! Avoid walking your dog in periods of high heat or humidity. Those that find it most difficult are the brachycephalic breeds, so Bulldogs, Boxers etc. Try and walk early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid the midday sun and walk in shade if possible. Fresh water needs to be available at all times, and changed regularly. Temperatures in cars can rise quickly, even on a seemingly cloudy day. NEVER leave your dog or any pet in the car and if they need to be transported in hot weather try and do this in the morning or evening when it is cooler or use your air conditioning.

Plants and seeds

- There are many plants that are toxic to animals, including daffodil bulbs, ragwort and onions. If you think your pet may have ingested a potential toxin please speak to your vet immediately (day or night) who will then be able to contact the poisons service for advice.
- Another seasonal plant problem is grass seeds. These often work their way in through feet and ears and can cause major problems like abscesses if not detected early. Keeping the fur around the feet short helps grass seeds to not get trapped and checking the feet on the return from a walk is often useful. Symptoms for foreign bodies in the ears include head tilting to one side (usually the affected side), shaking of the head, excessive scratching or swelling of the ears or any discharge. Another less common problem is that they can be inhaled and then migrate out of the lung causing an infection in the chest cavity.

Swimming

- Swimming is a good all round exercise for dogs, but it is important to make sure the place they swim in is safe. Check the plant-life carefully as some types of algae can be harmful and underwater reeds may cause their legs to become tangled. Avoid fast flowing currents and remember that swimming is a cardiovascular exercise that some pets may not be fit enough for, especially if they get themselves in trouble away from a bank. Although tempting, please do not put yourself at risk by attempting to rescue your pet.

Fleas/ticks/worms

- Thanks to central heating this can now be a year-round problem, particularly with fleas, but it is the time of year when these pests are likely to become more prevalent. Ticks are a problem particularly in long grassed areas in some parts of the UK, including Hertfordshire, but preventative treatments are available from your veterinary surgeons. Worms can be very uncomfortable for your pet and lung worm can cause fatal or at least life threatening issues – there is a heightened risk for dogs who eat snails.