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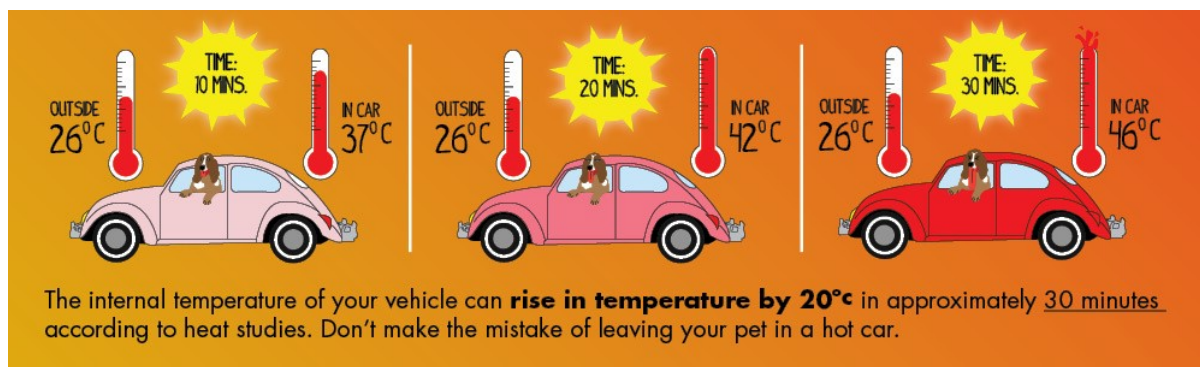
Veterinary newsletter

February 2021

Too Hot to Handle

Being in the middle of summer it is important to talk about the detrimental effects the heat can have on our pets. What can we do to prevent an often lethal heat stroke?

- ⇒ Always provide shelter and shaded areas
- ⇒ Always provide plenty of fresh water
- ⇒ Never leave your pets in the car on a warm day



- ⇒ Do not over exercise your animal on a warm day, make sure you get out early in the morning or at night when temperatures drop again
- ⇒ Leave a plastic milk jug filled with frozen water or a frozen big flat stone in the rabbit hutch as a portable air conditioner
- ⇒ Provide a paddling pool for the water keen dogs

Signs of overheating

Initially the pet appears distressed, will pant excessively and become restless. As the hyperthermia progresses, the pet may drool large amounts of saliva from the nose and/or mouth. The pet may become unsteady on his feet. You may notice the gums turning blue/purple or bright red in colour, which is due to inadequate oxygen.

What to Do

- ◆ Remove your pet from the environment where overheating occurred.
- ◆ Move your pet to shaded and cool environment, and direct a fan on him.
- ◆ If possible, determine rectal temperature and record it.
- ◆ Begin to cool the body by placing cool, wet towels over the back of the neck, in the armpits, and in the groin region. You may also wet the ear flaps and paws with cool water. Directing a fan on these wetted areas will help to speed evaporative cooling.
- ◆ Transport to the closest veterinary facility immediately.

What NOT to Do

- ◆ Do not overcool the pet.
- ◆ Do not attempt to force water into your pet's mouth, but you may have fresh cool water ready to offer should your pet be alert and show an interest in drinking.
- ◆ Do not leave your pet unattended for any length of time.

Canine cough epidemic in NZ

The current epidemic of canine cough is a normal occurrence in New Zealand and is caused by disease agents already present in New Zealand (**i.e. it is not an exotic disease agent**).

It is not related to COVID-19, and it is not zoonotic (not transmitted from animals to humans). Good hygiene measures should always be used when dealing with animals, and particularly sick animals.

Do not put masks on dogs.

What is canine cough?

Canine cough is a common, contagious, infectious upper respiratory disease, seen in dogs.

Canine cough may also be referred to as kennel cough or (acute) canine infectious tracheobronchitis. It is highly infectious but is not often fatal (high morbidity, low mortality). It is like the 'common' cold in people but is confined to dogs. Clinical signs may include:

- loud, high pitched cough, often described as a "goose honk"
- loss of appetite
- lack of energy
- retching or hacking
- nasal discharge.

Bouts of coughing can last for several weeks and may be worse after exercise. Veterinary treatment may be required to alleviate these distressing clinical signs.

What to do?

If your dog is showing clinical signs or has been in contact with another dog that has canine cough, isolate your dog at home and call your veterinarian for further advice. Your veterinarian may authorise some treatment for the cough (especially if your dog has other conditions such as heart disease), but medications such as antibiotics will only be authorised if your dog has signs of bacterial infection such as a fever or lack of appetite.

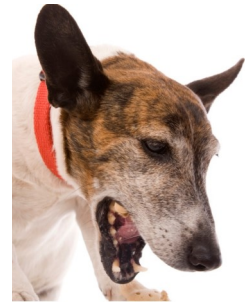
Remember to ring ahead to organise how and when to present your dog to the clinic - this means appropriate hygiene and infection prevention measures can be used to keep other dogs safe, if your dog does have canine cough.

How is canine cough transmitted?

Dogs tend to be exposed in places such as boarding kennels, training classes, doggie day-care, dog shows, pet shops, parks and beaches or in any other situation where dogs socialise.

Dog-to-dog contact through sniffing, sneezing, coughing and sharing water bowls are important means of disease transmission. Discharges from an infected dog spread disease-causing organisms into the environment. These may readily infect other dogs.

Time from exposure to onset of clinical signs can be between 3 -10 days. Infected dogs can remain contagious and continue to spread infectious organisms for extended periods of time after recovery from the infection. Any susceptible dog that contacts another infected dog, or a dog not yet showing clinical signs, or a contaminated surface, is at risk of catching canine cough.



Facial Eczema

What is it?

Facial eczema is a disease of cattle, sheep, deer, goats, llamas and alpacas (but not horses). After parasites, it's considered to be the most serious production-limiting disease of New Zealand farm animals.

The disease is caused by a fungal spore called *Pithomyces chartarum*. The fungus grows on dead plant material found at the base of the pasture – especially perennial ryegrass – releasing spores (sporulation) during the summer months, usually between January and May.

Under warm and humid conditions, spore numbers can rise rapidly. Areas susceptible to higher spore counts are around urine patches, areas sheltered by hedges, and northern and western facing slopes.



An important secondary effect of the liver damage is called 'photosensitisation', visible as a severe and painful inflammation of unpigmented areas and exposed skin such as the udder, teats, ears and face (this is how the disease got its name). But it's important to note that the disease is not always visible:

Facial Eczema (FE) is a serious disease that affects sheep and cattle and can be fatal. Your losses are much greater than they appear. FE, when no symptoms are visible, can reduce lifetime productivity by up to 25 percent.

What are the signs?

Within 1 -2 days of exposure to high spore counts, in milking cows there can be a dramatic short-term drop in milk production which is thought to precede liver damage.

The following can result within 1 – 2 weeks after exposure to high spore counts in affected animals:

- Dullness, weakness, not eating, and ill-thrift/weight loss
- Sun sensitivity, sunburn, redness, and swelling on unpigmented or hair-free areas
- Liver failure leading to risk of metabolic disease the following season
- Sudden death

There are practical ways in which you can reduce your losses. You should use two or three methods together.

Breeding for increased tolerance to FE should be your first line of defence. Buying FE-tolerant rams will make a great difference in only a few years, but you have to be consistent in only bringing tolerant rams into your flock.

You can give all or part of your flock a zinc bolus, which lasts six weeks, or dose with zinc oxide weekly or fortnightly to reduce liver damage. For large numbers, you can spray zinc on pasture.

Quit stock early, build up feed reserves, and aim for light rotational grazing.

Fungicide sprayed before the onset of FE season will reduce spore counts for five to six weeks. Use these pastures for your replacement ewe lambs and hoggets. Aim to be lightly stocked through the danger period.

Don't relax precautions too soon—a few cool nights or heavy rain doesn't mean danger has passed. Once spore counts rise, pastures remain toxic until the spores disappear. Faecal spore counting offers a method of determining how much challenge has occurred to the animals.

Face-Guard™
Intra-ruminal zinc bolus

FACIAL ECZEMA AHEAD

Face-Guard™ for the protection and control of Facial Eczema in your stock.

- ✓ Proven efficacy on NZ farms
- ✓ Increase animal performance
- ✓ No wastage - single application
- ✓ Individual dosing

Face-Guard™ slowly erodes within the rumen to release zinc to aid the prevention of facial eczema.

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Vet Only

Caring for your rabbit – Part 2

Spay/Castration

Uterine adenocarcinoma is a malignant cancer that can affect female rabbits over two years of age. The best prevention for this disease is to remove the reproductive organs (ovaries and uterus) in a surgical procedure commonly called a spay. The procedure can be performed in females over four months of age. Spaying a rabbit also prevents pregnancy and can help control some aggressive behaviour.

Male rabbits can also develop disease of the reproductive organs (the testicles) but with much less frequency than females. However, some male rabbits have a tendency to become aggressive in their adolescence (8-18 months of age) and can also start spraying urine on vertical surfaces outside the toilet area to mark their territory. Surgical removal of the testicles, called castration, can control these behaviours if it is done before the behaviour occurs or shortly thereafter.

Recommended age for your bunny to be neutered is over 4 months of age.



Dental Disease

Rabbit ancestors ate a diet that was tough and abrasive, therefore they developed teeth that grew throughout their lives. Without this constant dental growth, the teeth would wear down quickly and the rabbit would be unable to eat and eventually die. Any condition that causes a rabbit's teeth to be worn down improperly or causes mal-alignment can result in serious dental disease.

The best prevention for dental disease is a healthy diet including grass hay and green foods. But even with this good diet, some rabbits develop disease due to other factors, particularly genetics. The treatment of dental disease is based on the cause and severity of illness. Your rabbit should have a dental examination performed by a veterinarian at least once a year.

Loss of Appetite

Rabbits are little eating machines and if you notice that your pet has changed his eating habits, there is cause for concern. The most common reason a rabbit stops eating is in response to pain. If every day you give a small amount of a healthy treat that your rabbit loves, you will quickly know when your rabbit's appetite is changing. The rule of thumb regarding the seriousness of the loss of appetite is:



Loss of appetite but otherwise acting normal should be investigated within 48 hours. Some rabbits may go through a slow down and then pick up again in a day. The key here is that the rabbit is still active and alert, and is still producing stools

Loss of appetite accompanied by obvious lethargy or depression should be considered an emergency and should be investigated immediately. This can be a sign of an intestinal obstruction or toxin ingestion. Another important sign is that no stools are being produced.

Respiratory Signs

Rabbits can exhibit sneezing, coughing and excess tearing. Not all these signs are related to respiratory disease. Dental disease can also cause signs that may mimic respiratory disease, such as excessive tearing that stains the eyes. If your bunny is showing these signs she should be vet checked.

Diarrhoea

True diarrhoea, where all the stool being passed is purely liquid, is rare in the pet rabbit eating a healthy diet. More commonly we see a situation where the rabbit has both normal and soft pudding-like stools in the toilet area. This is not diarrhoea, but a problem with GI motility usually caused by an inappropriate diet. If you notice true diarrhoea in your bunny, you should consider it an emergency situation and consult your veterinarian immediately.

Urinary Disease

The normal colour of rabbit urine can range from yellow to dark orange-red. The colour comes from plant pigments in the food or from normal pigments produced in the wall of the bladder. The urine can be clear or cloudy with a white precipitate. The white precipitate is excess calcium excreted through the urine. Rabbits can develop disease of the bladder or kidneys and may exhibit signs such as blood in the urine, straining to urinate, inappropriate or frequent urination, or the complete inability to urinate. If your pet is exhibiting any of these signs, you should consult your veterinarian immediately.