

# VetVan

## Veterinary House Calls

**Andrew Parker**  
Veterinary Surgeon  
BVSc MVSc MACVSc

**P: 3300 9272**  
**M: 0403 281 020**  
[andrew@vetvan.com.au](mailto:andrew@vetvan.com.au)

**Mon - Fri: 8am - 5pm**  
**Saturday: 8am - 12pm**

### NEWSLETTER ISSUE NUMBER 6

#### Greetings...

Hello everyone, it is going to be a long summer and I hope that rain, clouds and air conditioning help ease the heat for everyone.

I will be unavailable for consultations for the week between Christmas and New Year. I hope that all pets remain well during this time but if they require urgent care I recommend seeking attention at the Pet ER at Stafford Heights (Ph 3359 5333) or the BVSC at Albany Creek (Ph 3264 9400). Both of these centres have expert staff available 24hours per day.

#### Summer Storms



Although I wish for storms during summer, I also acknowledge that not everyone is pleased by such natural events. Many pets (particularly dogs) experience tremendous fear when storms brew. Overwhelmed by fear they will run, dig or jump with an energy far more powerful than they can normally muster. Sometimes they injure themselves, become involved in accidents or destroy property.

When animals show early signs of this type of behaviour it is vital to show no hint of encouragement as this will hasten the growth of their behaviour. Initially, it may seem unnatural, but I recommend ignoring or snubbing your pet if it is showing early signs of storm phobia. Pets view hugs and patting as encouragement and with time their behaviour will become more extreme. Nevertheless, some dogs' behaviour escalates no matter what their owners do.

If your pet's behaviour is becoming extreme there is a treatment available. Last year, I trialled a treatment regime recommended by animal behaviourists, unfortunately it proved unsuccessful. This year, I am using a different drug; it provides sedation but also helps in relieving the chemical processes in the brain that lead to a heightened fear response. This treatment is not for all animals but if you have a pet with very high levels of fear, please call me for advice.

#### Cat fight Infections



Cats are naturally nocturnal and even though all owners are supposed to keep their cats indoors at night what are you supposed to do if your cat howls and scratches at the door to be let out and doesn't give in or respond to scolding or cajoling?

The trouble is, nocturnal cat behaviour involves prowling territorial boundaries (fighting with other cats) and catching native creatures – although, I believe minor birds and land clearing are the greatest problems for native animals.

Anyone who has ever been scratched by a cat knows how painful it can be, particularly a deep puncture. If your cat has been in a fight there is an initial period where wound cleansing is possible, but if the puncture is deep, cleaning will soon become impossible as tissue inflammation and infection make it become very painful! The initial pain may subside after 24 hours and be replaced by a swelling

that is an accumulation of dead cells and debris (pus) if an infection has managed to overcome local defences. The bacteria that grow in cat fight wounds are amazing in their requirement for a very special set of environmental conditions. They cannot grow in oxygen; they require an anaerobic (non-oxygenated) environment.

If your cat has been in a fight, try and clean the wounds with a mild disinfectant (chlorhexidine is the best) or call me for pain relief and antibiotics if the wounds are deep or painful.

People can catch a disease from cats called 'cat scratch fever'. It is caused by bacteria that grow under cats nails. A fantastic product exists that reduces the number of these bacteria and decreases the likelihood of cat scratch disease. The product is called 'Revolution'. If your cat is difficult to worm, is 'scratchy' or has fleas, please use this product. I always stock it and will deliver it to your house at recommended retail prices.

## The Water Dragon

Bang, Crash. 'What is that sound?' I wonder aloud, 'Maybe it's the dogs chasing a moth.'

'I hope that's not the dogs chasing that baby water dragon I saw in the garage today', my wife exclaims.

I push the garage door button and run up the front steps to check on the commotion. One dog comes to greet me but the other stays behind a car. As I get closer I see him proudly standing over the lizard. Its little body is still and seems lifeless.

'Get out of it,' I yell and immediately feel bad as I can tell from the look in his eye that he does not know why I scolded him. I run over and pick up the little lizard, looking for a breath, it eventually comes but it is slow and shallow and my gut instinct tells me that it will die. 'Is it alive?' my wife asks. 'It's in a coma, it will probably die,' I answer. 'You can't leave it outside, bring it inside and keep it warm,' she beckons.

I get a hot water bottle and place the little dragon on top of it, protecting it from the direct heat with a couple of layers of towels. As soon as I get up the next morning I go and check on the lizard. It is still limp and flaccid. I pick it up and try to open its eyes. It remains unconscious but its breathing is stronger and not as shallow. Because of the slight improvement I decide to persist a little longer. To my surprise, the little creature seems to regain consciousness during the day. It doesn't suddenly get up

but it seems to get stronger and when I open one of its eyelids it remains open – looking at me!

As the lizard regains strength, it becomes clear it cannot move its legs on one side of its body. I ask my wife to hold it while I examine each leg. The front leg is fractured and quiet swollen and the back leg seems to be weak and in its hip there is a very subtle clicking when I manipulate it. As I examine the little lizard it looks at me with a cold ferocity, although it does not struggle.

I fashion a little splint and bandage for its front leg and hope that as it regains strength its back leg will improve. If its hip is fractured I hope that all the bone is sitting together and will heal with time.

The next obstacle that I face is what to feed the lizard. I contact a wildlife carer who has a reptile speciality. They recommend feeding mince and peas. 'They normally eat them out of a bowl,' he informs me. 'They also love a bowl of water' he adds.

Well this little lizard refuses to eat! After 48 hours I have had enough and with some difficulty I prise its little jaws open (finding that the row of jagged little teeth looked like dinosaurs teeth) and pop in a little meat on its tongue. Gulp, swallow, and lick the lip; that is the action. Never once over the next few weeks does it voluntarily eat. It is almost as if it has made a secret pact with itself, hunger strike while in the prison hospital!

The bowl of water is another story – it loves it and spends a lot of time just lying in it, head cocked to the side, listening and looking.

Over the next few weeks there are ups and downs. Its fractured leg initially swells, the skin splits open, but eventually heals albeit with an obvious scar. The back leg takes longer to heal but it too eventually seems strong enough for release.

When I eventually release the little thing onto a warm rock in the garden, it doesn't move, it just watches me. I turn away and walk inside. As I close the front door I steal a glance – it is gone.