



AutumnNewsletter

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Roamin' in the Gloamin' or why Dogs & Cats Roam.

Later in this newsletter we discuss new laws about mandatory microchipping. But why do our pets want to leave home?

On cats its pretty simple. Their natural territory is up to 4 hectares, so in their eyes they are not leaving home at all. As a predator they naturally need a large area to ensure adequate food. The size of the territory varies to some degree with habitat (available food) but is always large.

Dogs are a bit more complicated in that there are a number of reasons they roam. Dogs sleep about 16 hours a day so many dogs are happy to use the hours you are at work as nap time.

However other dogs will do anything to get out. This may be boredom, a local dog on heat in the area, or it may be due to separation anxiety. Some dogs will bite through a wire fence to get out, only to sit at the front door waiting for you to come home. Clearly thats not normal.

As with all behavioural issues there are lots of factors at play. Once dogs start escaping, they are often highly motivated to do it again, because its fun. I live opposite a school so my Labrador is always looking for a way out!

If your dog is escaping regularly, talk to us as it may be more than a nuisance, and indicate a more serious problem.





Smarter Than The Average Bear

Sheep are smarter than you think....!

Sheep and goats are believed to be one of the first animals to be truly domesticated, about 9000 to 11000 years ago.

Their desire to form a flock, and multitude of uses (milk, wool, meat) made them highly valued.

Many bird species are viewed as captive not domesticated, as they have only lived in captivity for a few generations.

Sheep do have a reputation for being a bit dim. As sheep have few defenses against attack, in times of stress they tend to form a flock and stay stationary. This has been interpreted in the past as stupidity. As the above photo shows, sheep are clearly not stupid!

In fact sheep have a high capacity to learn, and have a very good memory. Sheep can remember the facial features of up to 50 sheep for over 2 years. If you mix 2 mobs of sheep they will tend to congregate with the same sheep for at least 1 month after mixing.

Sheep can learn their way around a relatively complex maze after 3 attempts, and escape consistently after that.

Conversely their sense of smell is poor. They need to be within 30cm of their own lamb to recognize it by scent.

Parrots are also very smart often being compared to the intellect of a 5 year old child. Parrots have been known to learn over 100 words, and have been taught to count and recognize quantities. They can also identify objects by a combination of variables such as: shape and colour.

If you would like to learn more about parrots try this documentary "Parrots - Looks who's talking"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2x6zOCVpE8>



New Mandatory Microchip and Desexing Laws Start July

On 1st July 2018 all dogs and cats in South Australia must be microchipped, under the dog and cat management act.

So, what is a microchip?

"It's a thingy in their neck that's tells people who owns them. Duh". I hear you say.

Yes, but how does it work. It's quite cool actually

A microchip is a passive transponder. That means when we put the scanner over your pet's neck, the scanner charges the microchip and it transmits the number back to the charger. So, your pet has its own little radio transmitter, but with a rather short play list.

Microchips for pets first appeared in the 1980's but took over a decade to become well utilised. These days you can expect that a lost pet will be scanned if they enter any recognised rescue organisation, or council.

The Chips themselves do not contain your details. They contain a number that is held at a central register, and your details are registered against that number. That's why you can easily change your details if you move.

In further changes any dog or cat born after the 1st July 2018, needs to be desexed by 12 months of age unless they have a special exception. Normal exceptions are registered breeder or medical conditions making desexing inadvisable.

In 2017 the RSPCA nationally received about 34,000 dogs, and 33,000 cats.

About 41% of the dogs were returned to their owners, and 5% of the cats!

Not just dogs and cats but Snakes, Lizards, Birds Fish, Rabbits, Alpacas, Frogs, and Crocodiles can all be microchipped!

The latter with some caution.





Cats and Cancer

As in humans cancer is, to a large degree created by longevity. It is true of dogs cats and people that most cancers occur in the elderly. In other words we sill get cancer eventually if we don't die of something else first.

It is estimated on average animals get about 1000 cancers per day, that the immune system eliminates. The question then is occasionally does the immune system ignore one. We don't really know the answer to that yet.

A few cancers are associated with specific triggers. Smoking and lung cancer. UV light and skin cancer. Asbestos and mesothelioma. In cats certain viruses increase the risk of cancer. FIV depresses the immune system so many cancers become more likely. Feline leukaemia virus quite specifically increase the risk of blood cancers.

White cats that sun bathe get a high incidence of squamous cell carcinoma on their ears and nose.

Unlike dogs where most skin tumours are benign (won't spread to other parts of the body), they occur less commonly in cats, but are often more serious when they do.

Any skin lumps in cats should be checked, and usually sampled for the lab to assess. This is often very easy and can be done during the consult. Ulcers or scratches that don't appear to heal should also be checked, especially on hairless areas, or white cats.

Regular check up are the most valuable way of detecting cancers. Early detection and treatment can radically change the outcome, and have a major impact on your cats quality and length of life.

Treating Cancer

- Surgery is often used to treat cancer, and in many cases can cure the disease. Usually once they are removed they are sent to the lab to check they won't return.
- Chemotherapy can be useful for cancers we can't treat with surgery, such as leukaemias and lymphoma. Chemotherapy is usually well tolerated and can vastly improve cats quality and length of life.
- Some cancers can be inhibited, though not stopped, by simple treatments with common anti inflammatory medications, and diet.