

Welcome to the **Autumn 2011** edition of our Newsletter...

Jack's Diary



As you can see from my photo I am deep in thought as I dictate my diary to Val the practice manager; my editorial space has been cut to fit everything in, so I will be brief. Smokey and I have settled into the penthouse suite and life is getting back to some sort of normality, although building works are still in progress but less invasive for us!

Vet Cathal Rafferty and his partner Josie have decided they want to see a bit of the world before they settle down and are taking a three or four month sabbatical to travel around South America, we wish them bon voyage and see you soon!

I thought you would all like to know Vet Ruth Wickens will be returning in September after her maternity leave and I know everyone will be pleased to see her back as we have really missed her but I bet she will miss her little girl Isabella more!

Wow, I have just been exploring and discovered an amazing, state of the art digital X ray machine. The vets and nurses are really excited and listening to their discussion, it should make a big difference. It gives the highest quality digital X rays for accurate diagnosis, which are developed rapidly minimising anaesthetic time and importantly, it is better for the environment as no chemicals are used for developing. Phew, I have just made a sharp exit as someone was about to grab me; I think they may have been about to try it out on me!!!

We have four new nurses; senior animal nurses Rebeka Ayre VCA at Causeway Green surgery, Monica Bevan VCA and Sophie Williamson SVN are both at Dudley hospital and finally auxiliary nurse Hollie O'Loughlin at Quinton surgery. Therese Redfern is the latest addition to our reception team and I am sure many of you will come into contact with her before long.

Apparently we are out there in cyberspace, all very scary for me, a mere cat (not a meerkat!). Blacks Veterinary Group is now social networking; we have our very own Facebook page. I must get computer savvy and work out how to talk to you on there, so watch out for me. I will get there and won't be left behind! I might be getting on a bit but when it comes to technology I'll show them! Don't forget to keep checking, I believe there are some real fun things on there and clients get to comment on anything that interests them. It is a good opportunity to interact with us, so why not give it a try.

Until next time, take good care of yourselves.

Lots of love Jack xxx



Blacks Veterinary Group now have a page on Facebook

If you are a Facebook user do look us up and 'like' us!

Our page is a fun and informative place to stay abreast of all our news and offers; as well as share photos and thoughts on your lovely pets. Keep watching for competitions coming up too!



If you would like your pet to be part of our page, please send your photos and

/ or stories to – valmarsh@blacksvets.co.uk

Get your pet microchipped... Don't leave it to chance – Book an appointment today



Everyone loves a happy ending and we are delighted to bring you not one but two.

Once upon a time a ginger tom cat called Magnus and a ginger queen called Georgi, both decided to take a sabbatical and see what the world had to offer.

Five year old Magnus disappeared from his loving family home in Lapley, Staffordshire on Friday 13 March 2009 leaving his distressed family thinking they would never see him again. Then to the family's delight, two years later on Friday 13 May 2011 the Paulins family received a telephone call saying Magnus had been found and was waiting for them at our Causeway Green, Oldbury surgery. Thankfully Magnus had been identified by his microchip and although he was at least twenty five miles from home he was reunited with his delighted family. His owners said Magnus was quite a traveller, having bought him in Sweden, the family later moved to Norway before finally settling in the UK. Obviously he just wanted to explore his new homeland! Now he is back home Magnus has settled in as if he'd never been away! One of the major changes for him was that, in the two years that he had been away the family adopted another male cat called Milo. They were



worried about how they would get along but happily they are firm friends and as you can see love to snuggle up together. Hopefully his wandering days are over and he will enjoy being very spoilt by his adoring family. Magnus is the poster boy for his own vet's surgery too and is encouraging many people to have their pets' micro-chipped.

Beautiful fifteen year old Georgi went missing from her home in Ludlow on 9 April and despite numerous searches of the neighbourhood, her owner Andy Boddington had almost given up hope until he received a phone call on 18 May from Blacks Veterinary Group. Georgi had been found more than forty miles away and bought into the Dudley hospital on 27 April but she had an outdated micro-chip that prevented her owner being identified. Thanks to the relentless perseverance of our head of reception Tracy Wood, who fostered Georgi whilst endeavouring to trace her owner, she eventually reunited Georgi and Andy, who said, "It was the greatest feeling in the world to have her back". Andy went on to say he had adopted Georgi from neighbours when she was one year old and living in Oxfordshire but had neglected updating her information.

Happily all ended well for Magnus, Georgi and their delighted families. Of course the moral of these stories are to ensure you get your pets micro-chipped and keep their records updated. Well after reading these two lovely stories with their happy endings..... why wouldn't you? It is a small price to pay for peace of mind!



The Vital Role of The Veterinary Surgeon



Meet the Team.....

Our reputation at Blacks Veterinary Group for gold standard client and patient care could not be upheld without our team of excellent Veterinary Surgeons.

Practice partners Ian Orr, Simon Gubbins, Clinical Director Brian Hogan, Girish Thakral and John O'Flynn are supported by branch head vets Cathal Rafferty (Causeway Green), Miss Emma Pacione (Sedgley), Miss Ruth Wickens (Lye), James Swann (Quinton), Miss Helen Guy (Dudley in-patient care) and assistants Miss Chloe Burney, Stephen Baird and Frederike Schiborra.

What Vets do.....

Vets are responsible for the prevention of disease and for the diagnosis, and medical and surgical treatment of all animals from our beloved dogs and cats, to reptiles and birds. It takes at least five years of intensive training at vet school to be able to fulfil this role and qualify as a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS), the UK's veterinary governing body.

Vets have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date throughout their careers, involving many hours of study at work and home, and attending courses.

Some vets chose to study for additional qualifications (as if the university training wasn't gruelling enough!) and we have several certificate holders at Blacks Veterinary Group: in Surgery Brian Hogan, Medicine Miss Ruth Wickens, Cardiology Girish Thakral and General Practitioner Ian Orr. This means we have a diverse range of expertise on hand to deal with the most challenging of cases, and can provide a growing referral service to other veterinary practices in the West Midlands.

A Vet's life.....

A vet's work is highly rewarding but also very demanding. Our dedicated vets work long hours and no two days are the same. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, ready to deal with any animal emergency. Blacks Veterinary Group is proud to be one of the few practices in the area to provide its own 'out of hours' veterinary service and round the clock care for your sick pets.

A vet's day is divided between the consulting room and operating theatre.

You never know what might come in the door next!

During consultations vets not only deal with sick animals but, also regularly provide advice about preventing illnesses and caring for your pets, including vaccinations, neutering, worming and flea treatments, or training. They are also a great way for our friendly vets to get to know all our clients.

Sometimes when your pet is poorly, the consultation alone is not enough to make a diagnosis and our vets may need to perform further tests. We have a wide range of up to date facilities across our branches including an in-house laboratory giving results as soon

as possible, ultrasound scanners for examining internal organs, x-ray machines for diagnosing a variety of problems from arthritis to pneumonia, and a mobile MRI for more advanced imaging. This means the vets can hopefully find out what is wrong and prescribe the necessary treatment to make your pet better.

In the operating theatre our vets work very closely with our superb nurses (their best friends!!). The vets oversee nursing duties and are responsible for all patients from the moment they arrive in the practice to the time they go home. All of our vets are very capable surgeons, able to perform a wide array of procedures from neutering to lump removals to dental extractions and much, much more.

We always strive to improve outcomes for our patients. We currently use the most up to date technique for our patients with cruciate disease. Cruciate disease is a common orthopaedic problem seen mainly in dogs. The Tibial Tuberosity Advancement Technique is an exciting new method of dealing with this problem. Our results to date have been fantastic with many delighted owners and patients. This advanced technique is normally used only in Universities and Veterinary Hospitals and we are proud to have been using it successfully since last year.



We have invested heavily in a state of the art ultrasound machine (Vivid 7) to ensure that Girish Thakral can fully utilise his skills in dealing with his patients. Girish currently receives cardiac referral cases from vets in the area. He is equally at home scanning

abdominal cases. This combined with a new digital X ray machine will assist all our vets in making early, accurate diagnosis of your pet's illness.

No matter how good and conscientious our vets are, we can all do with some back up at times. Ruth Wickens has taken her Certificate in Small Animal Medicine. A certificate usually takes several years of hard work to achieve but ensures a deep knowledge of the subject. Ruth has helped all the vets on several occasions with those tricky and unusual medical cases.

Our vets get a great deal of satisfaction from making their patients better. Unfortunately this is not possible in every case despite all their best efforts. The personal and caring approach of our vets comes into its own on these occasions. The vets are there to offer advice, discuss all the options and help owners make often very difficult, yet informed decisions.

The vets and our nursing staff, reception, insurance and indeed every member of the practice team, are a close knit family relying on each other's help and support to be able to do the best job they can. They all leave the surgery after a busy day exhausted but happy, and ready to do the same again tomorrow!!

Physiotherapy For Your Pet



Blacks Veterinary Group are proud to provide an 'In House' Physiotherapy Service with Sarah Rudge RVN Dip. Vet Phys MIAAT at Dudley Hospital

Veterinary Physiotherapy is used to rehabilitate and relieve animals of all ages, species and breeds from a number of mobility restricting ailments affecting the following systems:

- Osteoarthritis, Fractures, Developmental orthopaedic disorders
- Muscular Strains, teno-synovitis, micro spasm and tension
- Neurological Spinal damage, lack of function, neurological atrophy
- Healing of wounds can be accelerated with Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is a way of treating acute problems such as a fractured bone or a torn cruciate ligament but also a brilliant way to prevent and delay the onset or deterioration in chronic age-related conditions, such as Osteoarthritis.

Using Sarah's skills, it is possible to:

- Increase the rate of healing
- Provide analgesia (pain relief)
- Reduce inflammation
- Prevent infection
- Aid healing of surgical wounds
- Return an injured leg to normal function (in most cases)
- Encourage early weight bearing
- Improve range of movement
- Increase flexibility
- Build and maintain healthy muscle mass / tone
- Relieve micro spasm and muscular tension
- Delay degeneration of the joints in old age
- Prevent secondary atrophy (wasting of muscles)

Employee of the Summer 2011 Season Sarah Rudge RVN, Dip. Animal Phys MIAAT

This award is about the one person that excels or makes an extraordinary contribution to the practice for whatever reason and is judged on that factor combined with overall performance. Under normal circumstances Employee of the Season is voted for by everyone in the practice but on this occasion, it is a management decision that the award should go to Veterinary Nurse Sarah Rudge.



Sarah wanted to develop and further her career but at the same time study for a qualification that would complement orthopaedic and surgical procedures assisting patients to a better overall recovery post surgery. After discussions with the partners Sarah decided to qualify as an animal physiotherapist and to that end studied for her Diploma showing total commitment and focus. She utilised holidays with relentless hard work to enable her to achieve her ultimate goal in record time, qualifying with merit and demonstrating the knowledge, understanding and skills required to treat animals with physiotherapy.

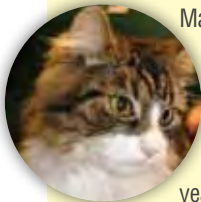
Since qualifying Sarah competently utilises her skills with excellent results. She works closely with the surgical veterinary team and as each case is different, assesses the patient to provide an individual treatment plan involving one-to-one sessions. As Sarah is an IAAT qualified physiotherapist most insurance companies will cover the cost of treatment as they realise the long term benefits for the patient.

Sarah has impressed her peers with her dedication and willingness to succeed and her efforts to promote a skill on behalf of the practice, that is beneficial to clients and their pets. We are all extremely proud of Sarah's success and have every confidence in her ability, which is endorsed by her appreciative clients.

Congratulations Sarah on achieving this award for the second time and we wish you every success in developing your area of expertise.

Toxic Alert!

Permethrin spot-on poisoning in cats – cat owners beware!



Many over the counter, *canine* spot-on flea products bought from supermarkets and pet shops contain permethrins or similar products. While these are perfectly safe for *dogs*, they should never be applied to cats, since permethrins are very poisonous to cats, causing fits and sometimes death. Whilst this is a year round hazard, a seasonal rise in fleas in the Autumn makes this a particular risk at this time of year. We have an excellent range of safe and effective flea products for your pets – please ask us to advise you on the best one for you!

Xylitol toxicity in dogs

Xylitol is a popular sugar substitute increasingly used as a sweetener in sugar-free chewing gum and other confectionery. It can also be used as an ingredient (replacing sugar) in home baking.

Whilst perfectly safe in humans, when products containing xylitol are eaten by dogs, it triggers a sudden release of insulin which causes a dramatic drop in blood sugar levels and can lead to liver damage as well. With an increasing number of products containing xylitol, this is something to be very aware of.



Antifreeze toxicity in pets

Ethylene glycol, used as antifreeze in car radiators, is a potential hazard for many pets at this time of year. It is sweet tasting and very palatable to both dogs and cats, but also very toxic. If ingested, even small amounts can cause serious kidney failure and usually death. Any spilt antifreeze is a huge hazard for pets.

A warm welcome to our new vet from Germany Miss Frederike Schiborra Dr. Med. Vet., MRCVS



Having graduated from the University of Veterinary Medicine in Hanover Germany in 2006, Frederike gained a wealth of experience whilst working at two first and second opinion small animal clinics in Germany. Frederike has excellent client communication skills and is always keen to broaden her veterinary knowledge whenever possible. She always aims for the highest quality medical care with special interest in ultrasound imaging, small mammal medicine, internal medicine and soft tissue surgery. Prior to moving to the UK, Frederike contributed articles to several veterinary publications.

Since arriving at Blacks Veterinary Group Frederike has earned the respect of clients and colleagues alike and has risen to the challenge of working in a busy hospital environment at Dudley, which she says never ceases to amaze her. The many diverse and complex cases encountered are an exciting prospect and she enjoys the interaction with her colleagues.

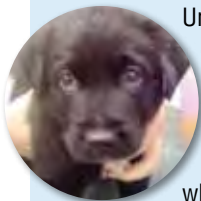
Frederike enjoys foreign travel, running, sailing and reading and is looking forward to visiting her family in August and a happy reunion with her three year old cat Loki who will be travelling back to the UK with her.

Our Star Pets of the Season are **Stanley & Alice** but also to the memory of their brave little brother **Chunk**, who sadly didn't make it!



Chunk, Stanley and Alice are cross breed, rescued puppies who have had a very tough start to life indeed. After being rescued from certain death when they were dumped in a carrier bag at a day old, they were hand reared. At the age of 6 weeks, the puppies suddenly became very ill. Chunk began to show symptoms first, developing severe diarrhoea, vomiting and becoming uninterested in his food. His owner knew there was something wrong and rushed him into the Dudley Hospital for a Vet to assess. Due to his tell tale symptoms, Veterinary Surgeon Helen Guy performed a faecal test in-house which confirmed her suspicions, Chunk was positive for parvo virus. Stanley began to display the same symptoms over the following days, and was admitted for treatment, which also turned out to be positive for parvo.

The puppies were hospitalised immediately and an intensive treatment regime commenced, involving Intravenous fluids, placement of a naso-gastric feeding tube and a cocktail of medications. As parvo is a highly contagious disease, the puppies had to be isolated from each other and other dogs and "barrier nursed" to prevent spread of the disease.



Unfortunately after several days of intensive treatment and dedicated nursing care, Chunk deteriorated rapidly and was showing no sign of any improvement let alone a recovery. A heart-breaking decision had to be made and to prevent his suffering he was put to sleep, which was incredibly upsetting for the whole veterinary and nursing team.

Within a couple of days, Alice, Stan's litter mate developed the same symptoms, and she too was confirmed positive for parvo. Both surviving puppies were under the caring watch of Helen Guy and the nursing team, in our isolation ward. Round the clock nursing and observations were required to keep the puppies from deteriorating, which due to their tiny size and young age was a high possibility. Parvo has a very high mortality rate and lots of dogs unfortunately, do lose their lives to this disease at a young age. Thankfully, after 16 days of top standard veterinary care, both Stanley and Alice showed massive improvement and were well enough to



go home on oral medication. Luckily, in the near future, they will be old enough to be vaccinated against parvovirus (along with numerous other diseases) and never be at risk again.

The puppies were insured with Petplan from 6 weeks old, and had immediate veterinary cover, meaning the cost of all treatment was covered ensuring they received all the expensive anti-viral drugs and gold standard care to give them the best possible chance of recovery.

Parvo virus is a very common disease, particularly in the West Midlands area and can affect puppies and dogs of any age that have not had their annual booster. Sadly it can be passed to each other from a single encounter, even whilst out walking or playing in the park.

The story of Chunk, Stanley and Alice not only highlights the importance of vaccination, which is for your pet's protection and your peace of mind but also demonstrates the benefit of instant pet insurance cover. No matter what the age, even cute puppies and kittens can be very vulnerable and are just as liable to end up requiring emergency treatment from a vet.

Star Pets Of the Season – Stanley & Alice Each season surgeries will select a Star Pet so don't forget to check the gold star boards in your waiting room

.....and finally, a message to Vet Helen Guy

"Thank you so much Helen for saving Alice and me. We were so poorly everyone thought we were going to die! But you never gave up on us; you came in at night and on your weekend off just to make sure we were alright and wow just look at us now! I just wanted to give you a big wet sloppy kiss (yes that's my tongue not your nose!!) and shout from the roof tops how important it is to have your parvovirus vaccine. Sadly, my little brother Chunk didn't make it and all the vets and nurses were very, very sad and I saw some of them crying, so please, please get your new puppies vaccinated against this potentially life threatening disease."

Love and licks Stanleyxxx



What's in a Name? **GYPSY CLEE** takes in the amazing view from the top of Shropshire's **BROWN CLEE**

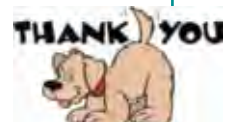


Dudley receptionist Kendall Clee wanted to share this beautiful photograph of Gypsy, resting on top of Brown Clee Hill Shropshire. Kendall had this photograph published in Country Walking Magazine which she subscribes to, as a birthday surprise for her husband.

Kendall and her husband Martin re-homed 10 year old Gypsy from the Dogs Trust at Evesham in April 2004. She was described as a 'male' Lurcher on their website but clearly is too beautiful to be a boy! Kendall said, "We believe she is a Bedlington/Whippet cross with a bit of Kangaroo thrown in (she can jump very high). She really is the perfect dog, really gentle and loves everyone, as much as we love her."

On Behalf Of All Our Lovable Furry Orphans..... Blacks Veterinary Group Would Like To Say A Big

'Thank You'



For Your Kind, Generous Donations With Your Help We Have Been Able To Care For And Re-Home Many Stray And Unwanted Animals!
You Have Made Such A Massive Difference To The Lives Of Many Lucky Puss Cats & Pooches