

Fact or Fiction?

Busting some of the most common myths about pet healthcare

Whether we speak to friends and family or research topics on the internet, there's certainly lots of advice out there for pet owners, much of it conflicting! So how can we be certain that we're acting in our pets' best interests and following sound, proven guidance when there's so much advice to choose from? Here at Blacks, we put education at the centre of our practice and aim to equip our clients with the latest advice on a broad range of pet healthcare topics.

We regularly encounter views about pet health that are either based on outdated information or that there is a lack of evidence for. Here are some of the most common misconceptions:

MYTH: Bitches should have a litter before spaying

OUR ADVICE: There is insufficient medical evidence to support the notion that bitches should give birth before they are spayed. In fact, there are many complications and risks that can arise during pregnancy, so unless you are certain that you want your dog to breed, it is far safer to spay earlier in their reproductive life than risk an unwanted pregnancy. A litter of pups is a huge commitment and ensuring that they are properly cared for and find good, caring homes can be both costly and time consuming.

MYTH: Pets build up natural immunity so there is no need to vaccinate every year.

OUR ADVICE: Firstly, vaccinations run in cycles and not all need to be updated every year. Ask your vet for guidance on this. Whilst some pets may still retain a level of immunity within a few months of their due date, many do not, and there is no way to be certain without thorough testing. One thing we know for sure is that immunity does not build and the only way to be confident that your pet is protected is to follow the immunisation schedule set out by



By Dr Kevin Orembo, Blacks Vets,
BVM Cert AVP MRCVS

your vet. We are also often asked about natural alternatives to vaccinations and medication. Again, there is little evidence to support their effectiveness with results varying greatly from animal to animal. Alternative medicine isn't regulated by a central body meaning that quality of ingredients cannot be standardised and monitored, which in turn poses a potential safety risk to your pet. As a practice, we never take risks with the health of your pet and only use proven medication that has been thoroughly tested through professional, clinical trials.

MYTH: Bones are good for dogs

OUR ADVICE: Whilst your dog may certainly enjoy gnawing on a juicy bone, we unfortunately see regular cases that demonstrate the damage they can do. Both cooked and raw bones can shatter and become stuck in the throat or other areas of the digestive system. This can lead to dangerous complications. Every year we see cases of dogs requiring urgent surgery to remove trapped bone and sadly, some dogs don't even make it to us and die from choking. Death can also be caused by bone shards tearing the oesophagus which is irreparable and can also lead to blockages and damage in the intestines. It is usually far safer to give your dog a chew toy to chomp on. Always choose a reputable manufacturer and make sure that the toy has been rigorously tested for durability.

MYTH: All pets have fleas at this time of year

OUR ADVICE: We sometimes hear the idea that fleas are seasonal and an inevitable aspect of pet ownership. This simply isn't true. A flea infestation can happen at any time of the year leaving your pet not only uncomfortable but also a risk to others, including humans! An infestation at home can be difficult to resolve and involves rigorous cleaning and washing repeatedly over a 4-week period to ensure

that both live fleas and eggs are removed. Left unchecked, fleas can cause nasty skin irritation in pets which can then lead to secondary infections. In some cases, a heavy flea burden can even cause anaemia. A simple monthly treatment applied to the back of the neck is easy to apply and prevents unnecessary suffering.

MYTH: My cat is a house cat so doesn't need insurance or worming treatment

OUR ADVICE: This is something we hear frequently and although it is tempting to believe that cats are at less risk if kept in the home, our case-load shows otherwise! Good pet insurance shouldn't just cover you for accidents but a broad variety of conditions that may not be detectable in the first instance. Heart disease, joint problems or respiratory issues can all present themselves in seemingly healthy pets, leaving owners faced with significant bills to cover. It's also worth considering that curious felines are likely to be just as inquisitive around

the home and are susceptible to ingesting common household toxicants such as plants, medication and insecticides. In terms of worms, some types can be transmitted to kittens via their mother so your new fluffy bundle may already be infected when you bring them home. We recommend regular worming and flea treatment as part of your pet's care regime, irrespective of whether your cat goes outdoors.

As with many areas of healthcare, recommendations can vary and change, so our job as veterinary professionals is to stay abreast of the latest technology, thinking and studies so that our advice to clients is always based on a solid footing. Ultimately, our aim is your aim – to keep your pets happy and healthy for as long as possible and we are always pleased to explain our approach. Feel free to contact our friendly team, at any of our five Black Country branches.

For further information visit:
www.blacksvets.co.uk

NEW PET?

Give your pet the best start in life

Pet Starter Package

FOR PUPPIES, KITTENS & BUNNIES

- Primary vaccinations**
- Microchip for life**
- Flea, Worm & Mite treatment includes cover for lungworm**
- Full veterinary health check**
- 1 FREE emergency call out within first 3 months**
- 4 weeks FREE Pet Plan insurance**

PRICE MATCH GUARANTEE

ALSO INCLUDES:

- 6 month health check
- Royal Canin food
- 10% off Neutering
- 24/7 access to the Blacks Veterinary Hospital
- Free pet toy

BLACKS VETS

Blacks Vets
www.blacksvets.co.uk

Rated 5* by our clients on Vet Help Direct

WINNER
bestUKvets2016
VetHelpDirect.com - Independent Vet Reviews