

Emergencies

How to handle them

The Main Message is **Phone the Cat Clinic on 9417 6613, anytime.**

Emergencies, by definition, are unexpected events where there is pain or danger. Fortunately, the cats who come to the Cat Clinic are pretty considerate, and rarely call us back after hours. However, waiting for the one midnight call that happens only four or five times a year is expensive socially and financially. **After suveying you, the Cat Clinic clients, and finding the best after hours service in Sydney,** these are the current Emergency Service arrangements. The Cat Clinic is open till 8 PM weeknights and is open on Saturday and Sunday afternoon till 4 pm as well. These long opening hours, with the vet available, means that there is a low call-back frequency (plus our clients are very considerate). **If you have a problem, please phone the Cat Clinic.**



If we are open, you will be seen as soon as possible. If we are closed, the phone service will direct you how to page North Ryde Veterinary Specialist Hospital, in near the M2 / Epping Rd junction, where there is a Nurse and a specially qualified Vet **awake and functioning all night.** This is, we believe, a better service than having a daytime vet called out of bed, and will result in a **quicker service for any critical problem.** The Emergency Service (called **aces**) will fax us with details of treatments and we will discuss follow-up care of your cat with you and the vet there. They are also a Specialist Surgical facility, and they thrive on adrenaline.

The 'take home message is – always phone the Cat Clinic first. Your cat's comfort is our priority, and you will be given all the information you need.

Thank you for your help in reducing the stress of 'waiting for a crisis'.

Heartworm in Cats

This is a significant issue in the veterinary field. Cats have been getting heartworm for a long time, but until recently it was consigned to the "too hard basket". Most pet owners are now aware of the problem of heartworm in dogs, and responsible owners medicate their dogs regularly to prevent the devastating illness that a large heartworm burden causes for the dog, because it is now a very common problem (80% of dogs not on effective medication have heartworm in Sydney).

In summary, Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes, so anyone can get bitten. The migrating larvae cause low level illness and no one knows how commonly that occurs. The adult heartworm causes trouble wherever it is (heart, lungs, brain, spinal cord,

anywhere). Treatment is unreliable and unpleasant, and one of the symptoms of the disease is sudden death so there is often no opportunity there to treat anyway. It is possible to prevent it, so you need to find out more and make up your own mind.

How big is the Problem in Cats?

Well, if you are a cat with heartworm, it is (a) going to be very difficult to find out about the heartworm (no good reliable tests in cats yet, even X-rays of the chest are not definitive) (b) you are going to have lung problems for a long time, even if the heartworm is cleared (c) treating you for your heartworm has a 1 in 5 chance of killing you (d) NOT treating you for your heartworm leaves you with a 1 in 5 chance of dying from it anyway.

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And literally right there in front of owner and vet, as the reaction to the dying heartworm is so powerful. What to do? Prevention is much better than cure, so read on.

How common is the problem in Cats?

Once again cats are being secretive, and it is hard to tell how common both the early and late stages of the disease are because there are no tests to find out!

In Sydney, a survey showed 2% of cats had heartworm in their hearts and lung arteries. Since one of the symptoms of heartworm disease is **sudden death**, it is a bit hard to find out how many are really affected. The other main symptom is **chronic coughing**, often put down to Feline Asthma (or ignored). Dr. Kendall believes that some of the asthma's are triggered by migrating heartworm larvae, so while they may not kill the cat, they do make life a burden. Some of the other symptoms are **vomiting** intermittently, and sometimes, just **weight loss**. In fact, the symptoms are a pretty nebulous lot, with no big clues.

What is Heartworm and where does it come from?

Heartworms are thin string like worms that live and reproduce happily in the heart of dogs. When boy meets girl (in literally an affair of the heart!), their offspring are microfilariae (little wrigglers) that swim around in the dog's blood. A mosquito feeds on the blood, gets a microfilaria as part of the dinner, and then injects it back into the next animal it feeds on. If this happens to be your cat, the microfilaria changes character to become a larva and then migrates from the skin to any number of places (heart, lungs, brain, spinal cord, kidney) and cause trouble as it grows. Fortunately, the cat rejects most of the larvae, but the intense allergic reaction that this sometimes takes may cause problems in itself (coughing being the main one, as most of the larvae do make their way to the lungs). If the larva ends up in the heart, then as it matures into a full-size heartworm and lives there a while, it will cause damage in the tissue around it, and when it dies, it may kill the cat from the intense allergic reaction it induces then (1 in 5 cats die, even if the vet is there with all the equipment and drugs necessary, it really is a nasty time).

What is the difference between Heartworm in dogs compared to Cats?

Heartworm is a parasite that has evolved to live in dogs' hearts, and a dog can quite often have a few Heartworms without any problems, and these are picked up on the routine testing carried out on most dogs at various times. Even small dogs can have a few worms in their heart without showing signs of disease. However, even one worm can cause a problem in a cat (and interestingly also in ferrets, not because of the comparative size of the worm to the heart, but because it causes a

strong allergic reaction in the lining of the cat's heart and arteries, and that is what causes the symptoms, and also the death of the cat (it is not simply that the worm causes an embolism or blockage of the blood vessels in the lungs when it dies, it is the cat's own over dramatic response which is life threatening, and known as anaphylactic shock). Also, the low numbers of worms, and the small chance of having a male and female getting it together in a cat's heart, mean that it is rare to have the microfilariae in the blood to pick up on testing. Tests for the worms themselves are also somewhat unreliable as they rely on there being a female in residence to make some of the tests work and others rely on the cat's reaction to the worm. It is all very difficult, but testing procedures are improving. For the moment the most reliable way to pick up heartworm problems in cats is by X-ray, looking for the allergic reaction in the blood vessels and followed by Ultrasound finding the worm outlines in the heart. Interestingly, humans also get heartworm, but it is usually an incidental finding during open heart surgery. It would be a bit of a surprise for the surgeon though!

Who is at Risk?

The mosquito is the bearer of infection, so it is one of the few risks that an indoor cat has, however there is a risk of being a "mosquito meal" anywhere. The main risk is living in an area where there are lots of mosquitoes and lots of dogs on ineffective preventative medication. As even one drop of an infected dog's blood can carry a couple of microfilariae, a large dog with a large number of Heartworms can act as a source of infection for lots of mosquitoes. So the answer is, any cat, anywhere that heartworm occurs in dogs is at risk. With your cat, you have a choice about how many things you take a chance on. If you choose not to take a chance on the distress that heartworm causes, then you should speak to your vet about the preventative tablets, and make an informed choice, yes or no. If you are a multi cat household, persist in your enquiries to get an option for your number of cats. It is possible to treat large numbers of cats economically. The answer to the question "how common is the problem" will be answered mainly by seeing how many fewer coughing cats are seen by vets over the next couple of years as more people put their cats on Heartworm prevention and make sure the larvae go nowhere.

Cats are not becoming harder or more expensive to look after, the change is that cat owners are being given more choice in their cat's health stakes and as we expect to live longer, so too we're expecting our cat companion to see us through more "life stages"!





Exclusively
for cats

329 Penshurst St.
Willoughby NSW
2068

Do your Cats



Does

her

cat breath

suffer from

Halitosis?

bowl you over?

Cats neither brush their teeth nor chew on mice everyday anymore

So it is not surprising that poor dental hygiene and bad breath are reaching epidemic proportions in our domesticated feline friends. The Really Interesting thing, though, is that feral cats in Kakadu also have dental tartar and bad teeth at about the same rate as pampered pussycats in the urban world! Come to think of it, before **people** started **brushing** their teeth in the 1920's (plus fluoride of course), most people expected their grannies to have no teeth! Some girls even had their teeth removed 'for their wedding' – presumably so they were 'low maintenance' for their new husbands!

Cat's teeth are a very different design to ours. Humans (and horses) grind their food, while carnivores like dogs and cats slice their meat straight from the bone.

The pressures that the cutting molars ("carnassial teeth") can reach means that the products used to repair human teeth just pop off cats' teeth, especially as feline teeth are much smaller and more brittle than ours. (Human dentistry techniques have, however, been found to be very useful in horses, and many of the major stake winning horses now have full scale dental crowns and fillings done to improve their race performance – apparently they run much faster when their mouth is not sore!)

Still, what this means for cats is that very little restorative dentistry has long term value, so **prevention**, as is often the case, **is the catchcry!**

There are 3 stages of tooth problems in cats, & they fairly neatly align with the age of the cat...

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Young cats (< 1 YEAR) tend to have Gum Disease primarily, especially cats who come from colonies or catteries. The gum disease seems to be virus-initiated, but then perpetuated by bacteria which thrive in the 'pockets' formed in the gums by the viral damage. At some point, the teeth start to erode, and the lesions become painful. Early intervention, including **dental x-ray**, cautery of the pockets in the gum, and possibly removal of the affected teeth, can halt the process, and certainly make your cat more comfortable. There are several new products which also help repair the teeth – especially new mouthgels. It gets applied daily one drop into each side of the mouth and the tongue then swirls it throughout the mouth. This kills plaque bacteria and probably viruses, so improving the whole oral situation. If you have time to brush your cat's teeth everyday, then there is special toothpaste to help you (and it does make a **BIG** difference). Chicken wings (raw, twice weekly) are also helpful, as is the new T/D (=Tooth Diet) from Hills. 6 TO 12 pieces each day, chewed, (in place of regular dried food) keeps the teeth polished very easily.

Once cats reach middle age, periodontitis sets in for about 80% of cats (this does include the Kakadu cats). At this point, a scale and polish of the teeth under

anaesthetic, followed by some form of maintenance (Maxigel, tooth brushing or T/D) will keep the remaining teeth healthy for a few more years.

Over the age of 10 years, however, it is the cat's metabolism and kidneys which become the main focus, and 'saving the teeth' becomes less critical. At this age, the bacteria in the plaque in the mouth are being filtered through the kidneys, causing lowgrade damage on their way out. This is now thought to be a major contributor to the high incidence of kidney failure in old cats.

Additionally, any anaesthetic becomes a bigger risk as a drop in the blood pressure can lead to sudden renal failure and early death. Thus, any older cat needing dental work needs to have a general health check and possibly blood profile done, plus an I.V. drip during the procedure to maintain blood pressure. This makes an anaesthetic a 'big deal', so if the owner is unable to maintain the teeth of an older cat (brushing is preferred), then we will probably recommend that more teeth come out than stay in, to avoid having to repeat the procedure every 6 – 12 months.

The front teeth remain, so their face is the same, but as the bad breath and focus of infection is gone – we may be 'buying' an extra two years of 'kidney time' if we're lucky! yes cats have teeth and they deserve attention!!!

Save us from fleas please!!!!

Does your cat scratch & lick herself all summer long?

It must be hard being an Actual Moving Feast for fleas! As Sydney becomes more tropical (blame who you like!), fleas and other tiny pests are getting a better deal – longer 'perfect weather' for their development, and more 'habitats' to grow in! Fleas love your carpet almost as much as they love your cat!!! If your cat strolls outside, even for only a few moments, they can bring back a colony of fleas, who stay on board while they feed and breed until the cat picks them off herself. (Some cats just can't be bothered, or are too young or too old to be able to catch them and so become 'Fleabags'!).

The **eggs** and **fleadirt** laid by these freeloaders – or should I say flealoaders!! – then come into your home (and your bed) with your feline mate. And that is the start of your annual Summer Flea Plague. These days, Flea Season is starting earlier, more like August than October, so by October we are **two generations into the Flea season**. At 40 eggs per female flea per day and only three weeks from 'egg to egg-layer – **you can do the calculations!!!!**

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Question:

What can you do now! You don't want fleas in your house!
or on your Cat!

Answer:

You have to Control the Eggs & that will Control the Fleas



Fleas love being
warm as toast too.

And it has never been **easier**. If you start by controlling the Flea Eggs, no matter where your cat goes (including boarding....), your home and hearth will never have fleas. Once the house is flea egg-free then all you have to worry about is the comfort of your cat when she goes outdoors – if there are millions of fleas outside, and she starts itching, you can use one of the spot on oil products to kill the majority of ‘Easy (Flea) Riders’. A few fleas on a cat is not a terrible thing – Fleas and Felines have coexisted for a million years (and cats therefore can build a tolerance to a certain level of infestation)! The Flea Experts are now saying what we’ve noticed for years – fleas have to be controlled at the ‘cat level’ (the adult fleas) and the ‘carpet level’ (eggs and larvae), and they bring out a ‘new best flea product’ every year to do one or the other (and occasionally both). There are now **many strategies** for flea control ask us how, **now!**

Flea facts that will help you control Fleas in your Environment

Fleas prefer Fur!! Adult Fleas spend all of their time on your cat!

Fleas have perfect camouflage!! If you can see 1 flea, there are 10 more you can't see! Even careful combing will only pick up 85% of the adults! They stick to the hairs like glue!

Fleas lay 40 eggs per day!! Once they've had a meal from your pet! And they start biting within 10 minutes of hopping on your cat!

And worse – (and cocons)- once in the environment – **are almost indestructable!!**

Flea control has to be year-round – by mid-summer the problem is huge so **by mid August you will have to think fleas!** and get rid of the eggs.

Cats will pick off 50 fleas a day from their own coats if they can, so the ones you see are the tip of the iceberg!!

Flea eggs are the perpetrators of the problem – you must get rid of them first and keep them out of your environment – no flea eggs, no fleas!!

Daily grooming with fine tooth comb – this the single most important part of any flea control program!!

Daily grooming with a flea comb (and it must be a very fine-toothed one) does three jobs in one

- (1) Checks for fleas and flea dirt so you know how big your problem is
- (2) Removes dead hair daily so less is shed around the house
- (3) Socialises your cat in a “Mutual Grooming” scenario like mother and kitten, so both of you enjoy it!

If you combine **combing** with a **flea egg control system** then you can achieve excellent, environmentally friendly Flea Control!

In the house – this is essential if you have a substantial flea problem or a pet with a flea allergy. Although the fleas spend most of their time on your pet, they shed their eggs into the environment to hatch, especially in the nice warm places your pet chooses to sleep!!!

House foggers or bombs – these speed up the elimination of fleas from your environment

There are many makes and models, but the essential ingredients to success are

- (1) Plan to do all the carpeted areas (no need to do the bathroom and kitchen as the residual egg-killing chemical will be wiped off next time you mop)
- (2) Vacuum thoroughly **first**, and **move all the furniture**, as the eggs are under the couches and at the edges of the room where there is less traffic, and move the cushions off the sofa so the fog goes down the back where the dust is!
- (3) **Use enough bombs.** Supermarket ones often only do 1.6 Squares so you need many more of them. Ours do 5 - 7 Squares so usually two or three will do a small house. Please ask us how to use them effectively.

Steam cleaning – will get rid of eggs from carpets and upholstery if **done professionally** (the machines for hire do not get hot enough to kill the eggs) plus **hot washing**

Bedding (70 degrees Celsius kills flea eggs & larvae)

Pest control professional – may be more economical in big houses or if severe flea problem

Surface sprays – If you have mainly Floorboards and only need to spot spray rugs and furniture. These are designed to be sprayed on all the upholstered and carpeted areas where your pet goes. To use it most effectively, you need to vacuum the carpet and furniture, then spray lightly (hold the **bottle** at waist height as you go around the edges of the room) all over the main carpeted areas **and down the backs of the cushions of your pet's favorite chair!!!** This product prevents the flea eggs from becoming adult fleas (the fleas are trapped in adolescence so they don't develop teeth to bite you or your pet). These usually for about six months and do kill the new eggs that may fall off an untreated pet.

Addressing the comfort of your Cat

If she is scratching, then fleas may well be the cause or contribute to your cat's discomfort. There are now several 'spot on' products to kill the fleas that are annoying her, and a new one each year! Our recommendations depend on your cat's lifestyle, your budget and your product preferences. Yes we do 'have things for fleas' ...!!

Urban Bandicoots ? Yes, and they bring their Ticks too!

Bandicoots are learning to live with us. Our well-cared for gardens are supplying them with grubs, and playing host to the ticks which fall off when they visit. The **Paralysis tick** has to spend part of its life on either a possum, kangaroo or bandicoot, and it used to be that you or your pet had to go to visit them in the bush to pick up a tick. However, now the bandicoots are straying **up to half a kilometre** from bushy areas to dig up front lawns and incidentally drop their ticks for your pet to pick up.

The signs that a bandicoot is visiting your yard is the little 'dibble' marks they make with their noses to get to the worms – it looks like someone has been trying to plant daffodils on your lawn at night! Seriously though, **the ticks can kill pets** and make people sick, so assess your geographical risk – and remember that bandicoots don't drive down roads – they follow a straight line from their bush to your yard (golf courses are great spots



for bandicoots these days too). Remember also that you can bring ticks home in your clothing and they can then attach to your pet. You can also bring them in on your washing in high tick season. Talk to us about **Frontline**, spray and Topspot, it now comes strong enough to kill ticks as well as fleas. In bad tick areas, you may even need to use Proban every second day. However, nothing supplants a daily check over for ticks – leave nothing to chance. We have bottles of a safe pyrethrin spray to squirt on the tick to kill it for easier removal. Keep in mind that, once a cat has been treated for a tick and given the antiserum, that cat may die from another dose of antiserum because it is dog serum and the cat can have a strong allergic reaction the second time (sometimes even the first time). The summer is to be enjoyed by everyone, including the bugs and mozzies, so please just beware.

What every owner needs to know about

Boarding their cat, food, flu & flea problems

Cats have become a much more integral part of our families in recent times, and the level of care and affection lavished on them now approaches that given to children and friends of the human variety. In the same way as getting a baby-sitter became more acceptable, even essential, to a parental evening out, so providing secure care for cats (and dogs) has increased in popularity. Plus, probably your neighbour or friend is going to be away at the same time, and so is unavailable for 'food and litter-tray' duties! Hence the Rise and Rise of Boarding Catteries.

Of course, your feline friends would prefer that you **never** went away, but everyone has other obligations so the occasional absence is unavoidable. How do you select a good cattery? Word of mouth and inspection, as with anything. What do you look for? Clean, quiet, odour-free premises with the cats being extrovert in the main (i.e. not huddling in the back corners – though there are always some 'wallflowers'). If the owner shows you through and talks to the cats on the way, you can be pretty sure they are feline-focused!

How much room does a cat need? Studies show that cats, given complete free choice, in the wild, will spend 85% of their time asleep – more than 20 hours a day. Cats actually only move from comfy spot to comfy spot to continue snoozing, especially once they are past kittenhood, so the accommodations need to be big enough for that plus food and litter requirements, and as long as the cat is 'entertained' and has some interaction, then they are happy.

The other thing to bear in mind is that your cat will behave very differently in a cattery than at home. They are smart and adaptable (amazingly so!) and even timid and aggres-

sive cats will usually calm down and start to enjoy the company of the cattery people.

They rarely get used to other cats, so mixing cats is not a good idea (but it depends on space and other things).



What about

Flu?

days sneezing or sore throat instead of two weeks of misery. The second problem is that most cats, especially pure-bred ones, get the flu viruses from their mothers at about 6 weeks old, and retain them for life, with the virus re-emerging when the cat is stressed (in the same way as cold sores around the mouth recur for us). And boarding is 'stress' – any change initiated by others is unwelcome to your average feline dictator!

This is the biggest problem in catteries, because vaccination cannot stop a cat getting flu. In the same way as human flu vaccination, it can only stop cats dying from flu, and usually shortens a bout of it to two or three

So cats frequently sneeze a day or two after entering a cattery – too early for a 'new' flu infection, and most likely their own virus popping up again. Does this mean vaccination is unnecessary? No, it is still essential in order to reduce any suffering to a minimum.

The third agony of flu for catteries is the ease with which it is spread. One touch of one nose to another is ample to spread the virus – whether there is a human hand as intermediary, or a bowl or litter tray or cloth. Bleach kills the virus – but cats are very sensitive to bleach too! It is a difficult juggling act, and I know that it is not always possible to protect cats from flu (especially their own viruses!), but careful cleaning keeps most cats disease-free. If your cat comes back with flu, think of the number of colds kids get at kindy – it's the way of the world, but the cats shouldn't be dirty or skinny.

What about

It is now possible to prevent a cat from getting fleas at a cattery. Bear in mind that fleas find cats the 'purrfect' host, and they used to be hard to control. Many 'fleas from boarding' on cats and dogs were, in fact, the reservoir of fleas that waited to hatch in the house while you were all away, so suddenly 3

Fleas?

weeks worth of fleas leapt on your pet when it entered the house. Fleas hatch in less than half a second once the cat or dog breathes on the cocoon! Or the vibrations of your walk overexcites them as well! Consider controlling or preventing the fleas from coming home by applying effective flea products before your pet comes home.

What about

Any good boarding establishment will feed whatever the cat usually

Food?

likes. If it is barramundi or sliced filet mignon, you will need to take your own supply, but it will be given to your pet! However, most catteries use premium foods these days, as it means the cats go home looking

in prime condition. **And toys or towels?** well, everyone tries to be helpful, but often the cats put their toys and towels in the littertray, and it can be hard to keep track once they go into the wash! However, small items are usually **OK**, but remember to ask for them with the cat – the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry!



How does

We are R.S.P.C.A. inspected, and have entered into the Quality

the Cats Pyjamas measure up?

Assurance programme. Your cat will be individually attended to, including a combing every day plus the obvious litter tray duties. It is a **Flea Free** cattery, which takes a huge amount of work, but the cats appreciate it! Your cat will get **whatever she wants to eat**, although the basic diet is a mix of the premium dried foods and raw meat, which is very acceptable to most cats. She will be fed 2 or 3 times a day as well (everyone looks forward to the meals when on holiday!). We insist on all cats being vaccinated if boarding, and we have had our cleaning methods checked by the University Professor of Virology to minimise flu virus spread, but total prevention is probably beyond human means (cats are actually meant to live a mile apart in

the desert and any closer housing than that creates problems!).

The best recommendation – our 'regulars' who include Missy, Hollis and Napoleon, Jack, Lucy, Oscar and Tom. We look after them regularly and they greet us like the friends they are.

Always look at where your feline companion will stay prior to your departure – you have to be happy that your cat will thrive while you are away (of course they miss you, but they are the ultimate believers in 'making the most of wherever you are'!). Then go and enjoy your 'time off'!

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