

FREE!!  
PLEASE TAKE ONE

YOUR  
VET



AUTUMN 2016



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#### OUR VETS

Dr Andrew Milledge

Dr Wendy Milledge

Dr Caroline Thursfield

Dr Jenny Tong

Dr Byron von Hoff

Dr John Strainge

#### OUR NURSING TEAM

Always eager to help you with your appointments, food supplies and any other questions you may have about the care and welfare of your pet.

Carli, Ingrid, Melissa, Bec, Tennille, Tam, Julianne, Sarah and Leeanne make up our team of veterinary nurses. Veterinary science students Louise and Vivienne work in our cattery on the weekends.

#### CLINIC HOURS

The clinic can be contacted between 8.00am and 7.30pm weekdays, between 8.30am and 4.00pm on Saturdays and between 9.30am and 4.00pm on Sundays.

Consultations are by appointment during the following hours:

**Weekdays:** 9.00am – 1.00pm 3.00pm – 7.30pm

**Saturdays:** 9.00am – 4.00pm

**Sundays:** 10.00am – 4.00pm

#### AFTER HOURS

Please phone the clinic on 9596 4804 for after hours emergencies, you will be directed by a recorded message to appropriate treatment options.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Owning a pet can be extremely rewarding, but it is important to remember pet ownership is a big responsibility.

The RSPCA recommends careful planning, consideration and thorough research on the basics of pet care as well as on where you are purchasing the animal from before buying any new pet.

Requirements for breeders vary from state to state, but it's a good idea to find out whether breeders in your area have to be registered and if there is a code of practice that they should be following. You can then ask the breeder for their registration details and what guidelines they follow. It's also a good idea to ask for references.

If you can, visit the animal in the place where it was born and meet its mother (and father if possible). This is the only way to be sure all the animals are well cared for and

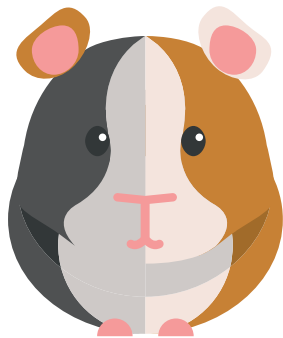
housed in good conditions. You can also get some idea of how big the animal will grow and what its temperament might be like. A good breeder breeds for healthy, happy and well-socialised animals and will welcome your visit to the breeding facility.

If you decide to go ahead with purchasing a pet, it is also important to know your rights as a consumer, under the law. As a consumer, you have rights against the supplier if a purchase does not meet these guarantees. What if you take the puppy home and it has a health problem, or doesn't get on with your children or other pets and you can't cope? A good breeder will offer to take back unwanted animals within a specified time period after sale. They should also offer to accept animals returned as a result of problems arising from an inherited disorder at any time after sale.

Get in touch with your local veterinarian for further advice on pet ownership.



# GORGEOUS GUINEA PIGS



With their sweet little faces and furry bodies these small animals have a lot of appealing qualities. Despite their common name, these animals are not in the pig family, nor are they from Guinea.

Otherwise known as Cavies, guinea pigs are small rodents indigenous to South America. They have an average life span of five to seven years and are grazing animals, who in their natural habitat, live in extended family groups. Guinea pigs make wonderful pets, but like all animals they do require daily care and attention.

Guinea pigs need time out of their cage every day. However, as true herbivores that are very low on the food chain, they should be kept away from dogs, cats, ferrets and rats. If you allow your guinea pigs some freedom inside your house, they will need constant supervision as they have a tendency to chew things - including electrical cords and cables!

Daily interaction and attention are essential for a guinea pig's well-being and they enjoy gentle handling and petting. However, serious injury may be caused if a guinea pig wriggles free and falls or jumps from your arms and it is important not to over-handle them, as they are susceptible to stress. Guinea pigs make a quiet yet audible vibrating sound when they are happy. In addition to purring, they make a number of other sounds like "wheeking," often when excited about food, "rumbling" when looking to mate and "teeth chattering" when stressed or agitated.

Their diet must be high in vitamin C and consist almost entirely of vegetable matter. Variety is essential and the food offered must be fresh and free from contamination. Special pellets are available from pet shops and form a good base for the diet, which must include greens, raw fruit and vegetables and good quality hay. Fresh water should be supplied daily via a drip feed bottle and replenished daily. Like all rodents, guinea pigs need something hard to chew on and will gnaw their cage if there is nothing else.

A piece of hard wood is perfect to use as exercise for their teeth and will help to keep them in good condition.

A guinea pig's cage should be thoroughly cleaned on a weekly basis and spot-cleaned every few days. Guinea pigs need to be groomed regularly with shorthaired breeds needing a weekly brush, and longhaired breeds requiring daily grooming. In addition to brushing, their nails on all four feet need to be trimmed regularly, about every 4-6 weeks.

Guinea pigs are extremely social animals so preventing a solitary guinea pig from becoming lonely and bored is not easy. They are communal, herd animals who thrive in the company of other pigs. Guinea pigs in groups are much more vocal and more interesting to observe. The best entertainment for your guinea pig is a friend so always plan to have more than one.

If you have decided that guinea pigs are the right addition to your household, don't forget to check out your local animal shelters and rescues and give some of these lovely little animals a wonderful new life.



### Clever CROSSWORD

EACH OF THE WORDS CAN BE FOUND IN THIS ISSUE OF "YOUR VET". ANSWERS ARE SHOWN ON BOTTOM OF THE BACK PAGE.

#### Across

- By what other name are guinea pigs known?
- One of the most common health problems in pet animals.
- When visiting a breeder, it's a good idea to ask for these.
- They recommend careful planning and research before you buy a new pet.

#### Down

- Who relies on foster parents to care for animals before they can be adopted?
- According to researchers, cats may purr to do this with you.
- A foster home is this type of home for animals.
- Many of these lead a sedentary caged lifestyle.
- When going away you can leave your pet at a boarding \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where does a cat's purr begin?





## OBESITY IN BIRDS

**Obesity is one of the most common health problems in pet animals. The sedentary lifestyle of many caged birds, combined with easy access to a bottomless food bowl, creates a recipe for an overweight bird.**

As with other pets, birds can also develop weight-related health problems such as breeding difficulties, decreased organ function and shorter life spans.

Diets fed to pet birds may be higher in calories than they would eat in the wild. Often pet birds are given seeds or treats high in fat, such as sunflower seeds and peanuts.

High carbohydrates such as pasta can be problematic too. Fruits are generally high in

sugar and can add to the calorie content.

Birds on seed diets are often fed by simply filling the cup with seed, usually providing far more than they should really eat in a day.

Consult your veterinarian to determine if your bird is overweight and what dietary modifications should be made. In most cases, switching from a seed-based diet to a formulated diet with vegetables will go a long way in slimming down your bird.

Increasing your bird's opportunities for exercise will also help. Move them to a larger cage, add climbing ladders and use foraging toys so your bird will have to work at getting their food!

## A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

**Going out of town? Leaving your fur babies behind can be as stressful for you as it is for them, but it doesn't have to be. Asking the right questions and knowing what's important to you, can help you decide on the right option for you and your pet.**

The best person to ask about boarding recommendations is often your pet's veterinarian. Once you have some names, it's important to do a little background check. Find out whether your state requires boarding kennel inspections. If it does then make sure the facilities you are considering display a license or certificate showing that they meet official standards.

The most important thing to do next is to schedule a visit and make sure you get a tour of the facilities. A good kennel should be largely odour-free and as quiet as possible. It should also be well lit, at a comfortable temperature and attended by diligent and caring staff.

The living and playing areas should look and smell clean, and be free of waste and urine to prevent spreading disease.

Check that each dog has their own adequately sized run and a schedule for exercise. It's also important that cats have enough space and are housed well away from dogs.

You will need to ask how often pets are fed, if you can bring any special food and what veterinary services are available if needed.

Also look to see that the kennel isn't overcrowded. It's a good idea

to ask the staff how many animals they usually board and how many workers are normally present.

Animals should look content and stress-free and also have proper bedding and water. Some high-tech facilities even have web cams set up so you can check in on your furry friend online while you're away!



It's important your pet knows basic commands and is well socialised around other people and pets. If your pet has an aggression problem they may not be a good candidate for boarding.

Some pets also suffer from separation anxiety and therefore may be better candidates for a pet sitter. If you are going to be absent for a long period of time, a pet sitter may also be a better alternative than a long-term boarding situation. A sitter is also a good option if your dog or cat suffers from mobility issues or is not up-to-date on vaccines.

Lastly, it's a good idea to accustom your pet to longer kennel stays by first boarding them during a short trip, such as a weekend away. This allows you to work out any problems before boarding them for an extended period.

It's important to note, when visiting different facilities, how the environment makes you feel. If you feel comfortable there and get along well with staff members, it's likely that your furry family member will feel at ease there as well.

No kennel will feel exactly like home to your pet, but if it can come close, you'll be able to go on your trip knowing your pet is safe and sound.

# WHY DO CATS PURR?

A cat's purr begins in its brain. A repetitive neural oscillator sends messages to the laryngeal muscles, causing them to twitch at a rate of 25 to 150 vibrations per second.

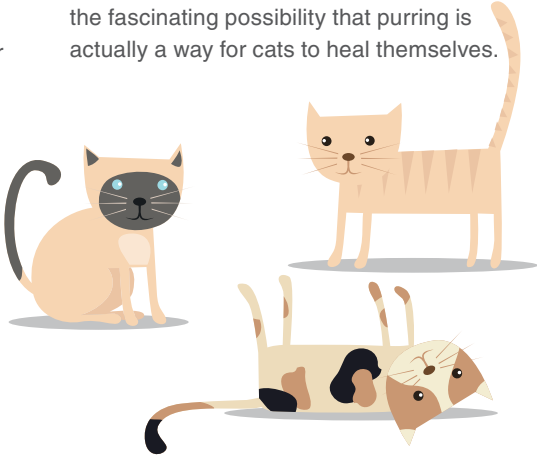
This causes the vocal cords to separate when the cat inhales and exhales, producing a purr. It's easy to assume that cats purr because they're happy. After all, when your kitty contentedly curls up in your lap for some well-deserved scratches and rubs, she's obviously one happy feline. However, cats also purr when they're frightened or feel threatened, such as during a trip to the vet.

Your cat however, may also purr to communicate with you. According to researchers, domestic cats can hide a plaintive cry within their purrs that irritates their humans while appealing to their nurturing instincts.

One study<sup>1</sup> found that some cats start purring at the same frequency to a human

baby's cry, in what's been called a "soliciting purr" and only stop when they get what they want.

Cats' purrs are more than simply a way to communicate though. It has been suggested that frequencies between 24-140 vibrations per minute are therapeutic for bone growth, pain relief and wound healing. This raises the fascinating possibility that purring is actually a way for cats to heal themselves.



In addition to repairing bones, there's also evidence that the series of vibrations caused by purring can repair muscles and

tendons, ease breathing and reduce pain and swelling.

With such sedentary life styles, it might actually make sense that cats would need to increase healing and bone density while effectively lounging around for most of the day. This would also explain why cats purr when sick or injured.

So super-healing feline or expert manipulator, the truth behind your cat's purr may not be as simple as it seems!

<sup>1</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8147566.stm>

# THE GIFT OF FOSTERING

Animals often need temporary homes to recover from illness or injury before they can be adopted and foster care programmes help to give these animals a new start to a better life.

Volunteer 'foster parents' provide temporary homes for animals who are not yet ready to go to a permanent home and help them recover from surgery, give them medicine for an illness or work with them to improve their behaviour.

For many foster parents, the single biggest concern is falling in love, especially if you already have pets at home. Why not just keep the foster animal yourself? While admirable, it's not always the best thing.

If you adopt a pet that you're fostering, you might have reached your limit of household pets and not be able to accept any others. This means one less foster home for the shelter to rely on.

So, when the day comes that you must bring your first foster pet back to the shelter, be prepared for some tears. But, while it can be very difficult to let go once you have become emotionally attached to an animal, remember, they are now much more likely to find a loving, permanent home because of your help.



Across: 1. Cavies 4. Obesity 8. References 9. RSPCA 10. Herbivore 12. Sitter.  
Down: 2. Shelter 3. Communicate 5. Temporary 6. Birds 7. Kennel 11. Brain.

# ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

## PRACTICE UPDATE

We welcome Dr Jenny back from long service leave! She has enjoyed a very relaxing extended leave but is glad to be back again with the team at North Road! Jenny spent a large part of her time travelling. She



Jenny enjoying her birthday lunch in Ubud

spent time in Ubud in Bali, where she also had a wonderful birthday celebration! She attended a family wedding at the Adelaide Zoo and then toured McLaren Vale and Kangaroo Island in South Australia. She also spent time travelling around the beautiful South Island of New Zealand. So she certainly has been busy!!

We sadly farewell nurse Claire, but she has some exciting and busy times ahead! Claire is pregnant, expecting her first child mid-June.



Claire, Tando and Eddie

She is also moving to Hiratsuka, Japan with partner Tando, their two cats (Ashleigh and Ted) and greyhound Eddie! Tando is a professional soccer player and has recently signed a 2 year contract with a soccer team in the J league.

We will all miss Claire, but wish her well as she embarks on this exciting journey.

## Easter Warning

With Easter comes all those chocolate treats!!! Our pets love them too, but remember chocolate is toxic to our four-legged friends. Small amounts can be poisonous causing serious illness, and in severe cases can even be fatal. So don't be tempted, keep all those chocolate treats out of reach from your pet!!



North Road Veterinary Centre can be found on Facebook, follow our page to keep up to date with the daily happenings of the clinic!  
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