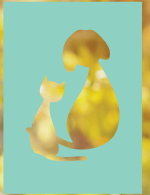


FREE!!  
PLEASE TAKE ONE

YOUR  
VET



SUMMER 2015



**for happy, healthy pets**

167 North Road,  
Gardenvale Victoria 3185

**P:** (03) 9596 4804

**F:** (03) 9596 7255

**E:** office@nrvc.com.au

**W:** www.northroadvet.com.au

**find us on facebook**

#### OUR VETS:

**Dr Andrew Milledge**

**Dr Wendy Milledge**

**Dr Caroline Thursfield**

**Dr Jenny Tong**

**Dr Byron von Hoff**

**Dr John Strange**

#### OUR NURSING TEAM:

Are 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, Claire, Bec, Tam, Melissa, Julianne, Tennille, Elli, Sarah and Leeanne** make up our team of veterinary nurses. **Sarah, Louise** and **Vivienne** work in our cattery.

#### 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.

## WHY CATS ARE MORE INDEPENDENT THAN DOGS

According to new research, domestic cats do not generally see their owners as a focus of safety and security in the same way that dogs do.

Animal behaviour specialists at the University of Lincoln, UK, conducted a study that demonstrated that while dogs perceive their owners as a safe base, the relationship between people and cats appears to be quite different.

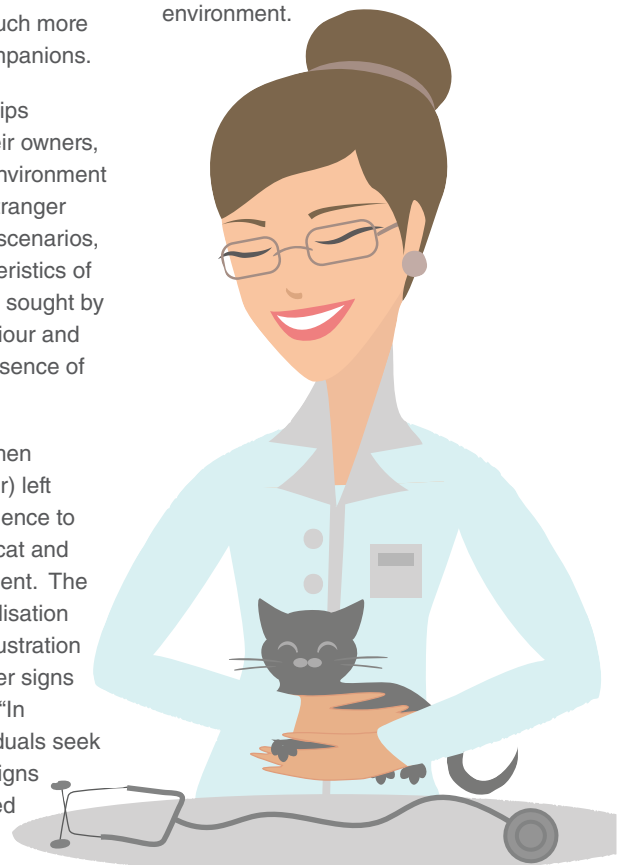
While previous research has suggested that some cats show signs of separation anxiety when left alone by their owners, in the same way that dogs do, the results of this new study show that they are in fact much more independent than their canine companions.

The study observed the relationships between a number of cats and their owners, placing the pets in an unfamiliar environment together with their owner, with a stranger and also on their own. In varying scenarios, it assessed three different characteristics of attachment, the amount of contact sought by the cat, the level of passive behaviour and signs of distress caused by the absence of the owner.

While the cats were more vocal when the owner (rather than the stranger) left them, there was no additional evidence to suggest that the bond between a cat and its owner is one of secure attachment. The researchers suggest that the vocalisation may have simply been a sign of frustration or learned response, since no other signs of attachment were reliably seen. "In strange situations, attached individuals seek to stay close to their carer, show signs of distress when they are separated and demonstrate pleasure when

their attachment figure returns, but these trends weren't apparent during our research." (Potter & Mills, 2015).

The researchers concluded that for pet dogs, their owners often represent a specific safe haven. However it is clear that domestic cats are much more autonomous when it comes to coping with unusual situations. Their findings don't disagree with the view that cats develop social preferences or close relationships, but they do show that these relationships do not appear to be typically based on a need for safety and security. While cats might prefer to interact with their owner, they do not rely on them for reassurance when in an unfamiliar environment.



# RATS MAKE GREAT PETS!

Rats have gained popularity as pets in only the past hundred years or so. These wonderful little creatures are relatively easy to keep, which makes them a great first pet for a young family or for those with space constraints.

Rats are inquisitive and friendly pets that can become very attached to their owner, making them a great companion. With regular handling, rats will happily curl up on your lap for a snooze or enjoy exploring the world perched upon your shoulder.

There are many species of rats, however, the type most commonly kept as pets is called the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Domesticated rats grow to a body length of 12-15cm (5-6") with a furless tail roughly the same length. Male rats are larger than female, more aggressive but lazier and less active. Females are smaller, but busier and more playful. Rats generally live for an average of 2-3½ years and there are many different coat types and colour variations available.

Being social creatures, rats should not be kept alone. Keeping a same-sex pair is ideal however, it is important to keep in mind that two adult males who are unfamiliar with each other may fight if introduced suddenly. Rats need a large house, preferably with multiple levels to provide plenty of opportunity for exercise. Be aware though that rats like to chew, therefore any cage used to house a rat must be made of materials impervious to chewing as they are excellent escape artists!

Rats love to play and their personalities will thrive with lots of stimulation so it's important to have plenty of toys available to them. They also need one hour to freely roam out of their cage each day. As they are very intelligent, rats can be great fun to train. They like to please people, are naturally curious and hate being bored. As well as enhancing the quality of their life, training your rat will strengthen the bond between you.



Often a surprise is that rats don't smell and are in fact meticulously clean animals. However, it is important to thoroughly clean their cage regularly. This will protect their health, your health and minimise any odour from droppings. Also consider the location of the cage as rats are sensitive to the heat and may experience heat exhaustion when temperatures are in excess of 30°C.

Rats are fairly easy to feed and love their food! They are omnivores, eating both plant and animal foods. Specially prepared rat pellets are available from pet stores which fulfill their dietary needs and can be supplemented with fresh fruit and vegetables. They must also have free access to fresh water at all times. Treats like bread, pasta and seeds should only be offered in limited quantities but can be used as rewards during training.

If you've decided a rat is right for you, there are many different places where you can purchase your new pet. Regardless of where you choose to buy your rat from, it is important that you give them a thorough examination before purchasing. If you are unsure don't hesitate to contact your vet for advice and a full checkup of your new furry family member.



## Clever CROSSWORD

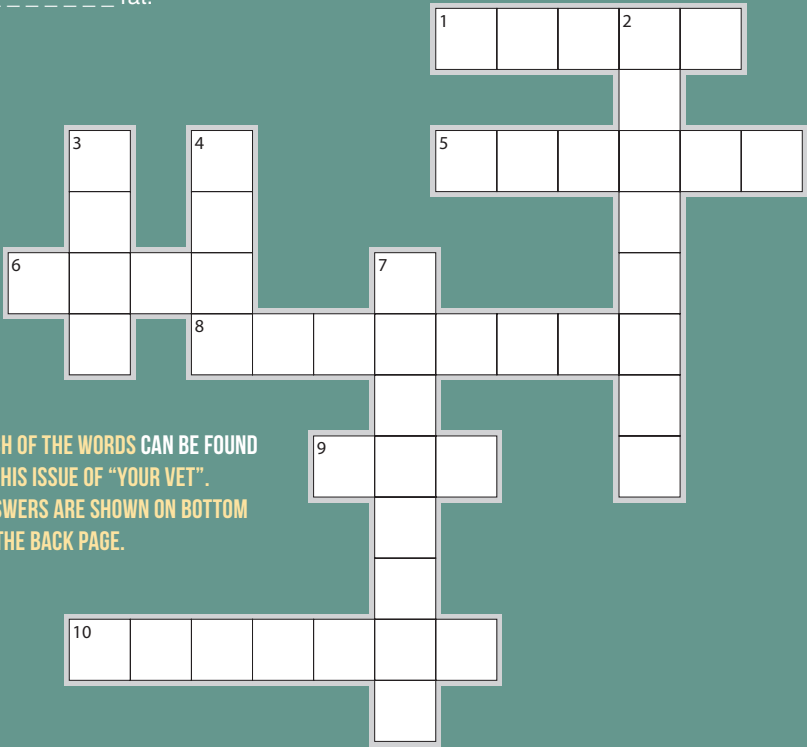
**Down:**

- 2. On a cat, what should you never cut or trim?
- 3. Do this everyday with your dog and you both benefit.
- 4. What is 10,000 times more sensitive on a dog than a person?
- 7. Do this to strengthen the bond between you and your pet rat.

**Across:**

- 1. The most common rat kept as a pet is the \_\_\_\_\_ rat.

- 5. About 75% of a cat's sleep-time is this kind of sleep.
- 6. These animals are very independent, according to recent research.
- 8. Even geriatric dogs need some of this.
- 9. Cat whiskers can easily be seen either side of its nose and upper \_\_\_\_.
- 10. Without whiskers what do cats have trouble doing in a straight line?



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



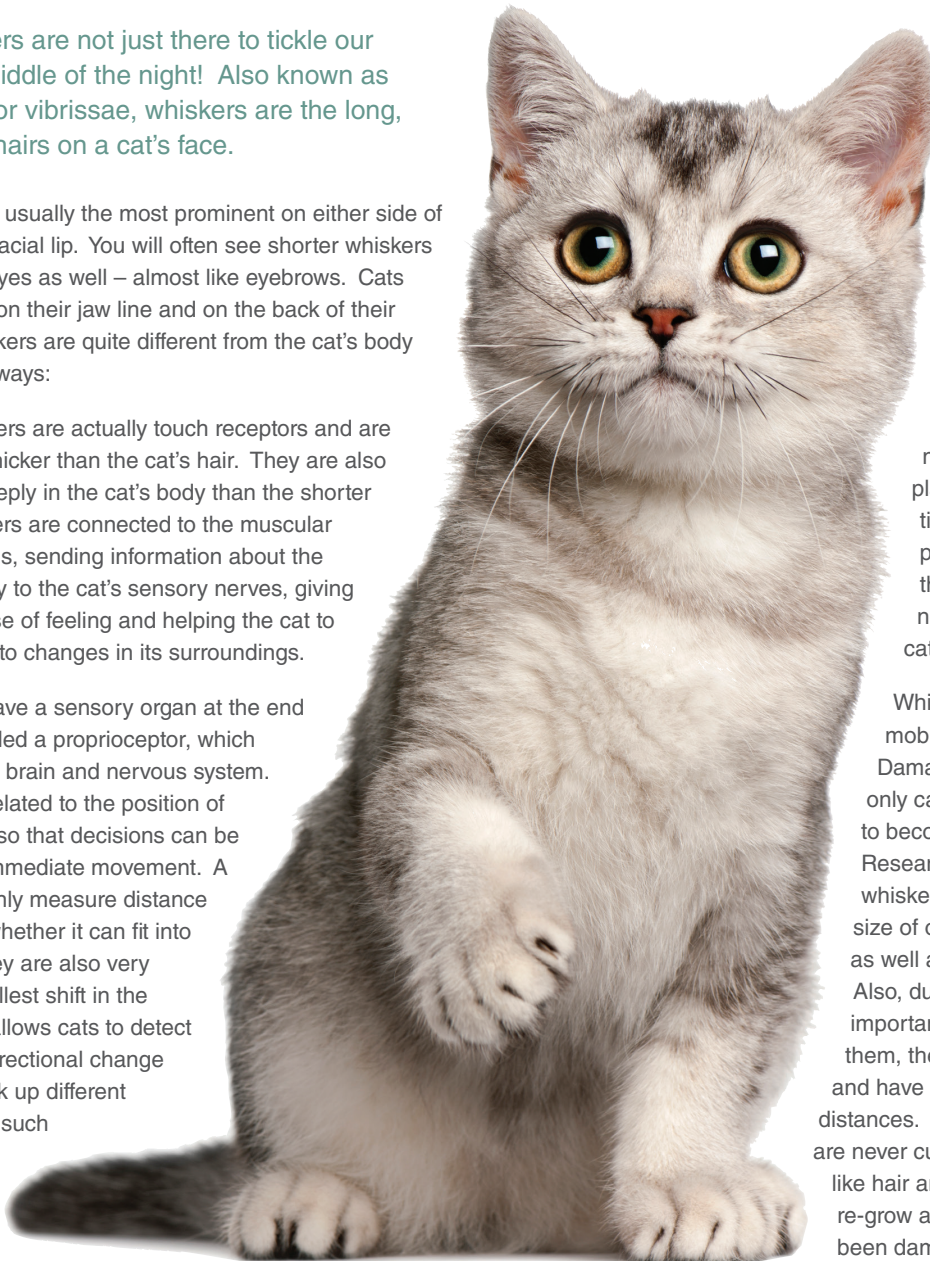
# THE WONDER OF WHISKERS

A cat's whiskers are not just there to tickle our faces in the middle of the night! Also known as "tactile hairs" or vibrissae, whiskers are the long, thick, flexible hairs on a cat's face.

A cat's whiskers are usually the most prominent on either side of its nose and upper facial lip. You will often see shorter whiskers above each of the eyes as well – almost like eyebrows. Cats also have whiskers on their jaw line and on the back of their front legs. But whiskers are quite different from the cat's body hair in a number of ways:

**Navigation** - Whiskers are actually touch receptors and are two to three times thicker than the cat's hair. They are also embedded more deeply in the cat's body than the shorter top-fur coat. Whiskers are connected to the muscular and nervous systems, sending information about the surroundings directly to the cat's sensory nerves, giving it a heightened sense of feeling and helping the cat to detect and respond to changes in its surroundings.

**Sensation** - Cats have a sensory organ at the end of their whiskers called a proprioceptor, which sends signals to the brain and nervous system. These signals are related to the position of the body and limbs so that decisions can be made for the next immediate movement. A cat's whiskers not only measure distance to help it to gauge whether it can fit into a tight space but they are also very sensitive to the smallest shift in the environment. This allows cats to detect even the slightest directional change in a breeze or to pick up different vibrations in the air, such as when they are chasing prey.



**Indication** - Whiskers also serve as an indicator of the cat's moods. When a cat is in a content or happy mood, the whiskers will be held straight and slightly to the side. As a cat becomes interested in something, their whiskers will come forward and fan out. As this happens, the cheek pads also appear to puff up as the muscles pull the whiskers forward. This is often most noticeable when your cat is playing. When feeling scared or timid, like with their ears, a cat will pull their whiskers back against the sides of their face. This is a non-threatening sign to make the cat's face look smaller.

Whiskers are a vital part of a cat's mobility and sense of security. Damage to a cat's whiskers will not only cause them discomfort, but also to become confused and disoriented. Research has shown that cats without whiskers have trouble estimating the size of openings and can easily get stuck as well as misjudge jumping distances. Also, due to the fact that whiskers are important to a cat's equilibrium, without them, they have trouble walking straight and have difficulty running and judging distances. Therefore, it is vital that whiskers are never cut or trimmed. While whiskers, like hair and nails do fall out, they will re-grow as long as the follicle itself hasn't been damaged beyond the body's ability to repair it.



## CATNAPPING

Cats are crepuscular which means that they are the most active during twilight times (dusk and dawn). During most other times of the day, they are either dozing or in a deep sleep.

Cats commonly sleep between 12 and 16 hours a day, which is twice as much sleep as most other mammals need. So, why do they sleep so much?

Cats are predators, so they are hardwired to give chase and hunt, and hunting prey takes an amazing amount of energy! Whether your feline friend is hunting for outdoor prey or tackling a catnip toy, all that sleep is reserve energy for running, pouncing, and stalking. Catnaps allow cats to re-charge, so they'll be ready to go for the next hunt.

When your cat is dozing they are usually laying upright so that they can spring up and into action within seconds. Cats are in a half-asleep state when they are dozing, and about 75% of a cat's sleep-time is this type of sleep. During deep sleep, cats are generally curled up, eyes completely closed, and they sometimes have their faces covered by their paws or tail.

While some change in a cat's sleeping pattern can be normal, a big change can signal problems. If your cat seems sluggish or is sleeping less than usual they could be ill. Contact your veterinarian if you become aware of any changes in your cat's normal sleep routine.

# WET VS DRY NOSE

A warm or dry nose is often seen as a sign of illness in dogs, but is it? The “warm nose myth” has many pet owners feeling that their pet may be unwell if the nose is warm and dry.

However, a healthy dog’s (or cat’s) nose may be very wet and cool one moment but then be warmer and somewhat dry the next. In fact, variability is quite normal.

The average dog’s nose is 10,000 times more sensitive to odours than the human nose. Their noses secrete a thin layer of mucus that helps to absorb scent chemicals. A moist nose is also one of the ways that dogs regulate their body temperature and cool down. They don’t have sweat glands as such, so dogs secrete sweat from the pads of their feet and their noses.

While a moist nose is perfectly normal, if your dog has a runny nose accompanied by coughing, sneezing, wheezing or difficulty breathing then a visit to the vet is necessary. Your dog may have a respiratory infection or an obstruction in its nose.

On the other hand, various things can make your dog’s nose dry and the dryness isn’t necessarily an indication of something being wrong. An ill animal will generally have a warm, dry nose in addition to other symptoms, like lethargy, decreased or absent appetite, or vomiting/diarrhoea.

Sensitivity to plastic is a common issue that can cause your dog to have a dry nose. A quick and easy fix is to switch to stainless steel or ceramic bowls. Another regular culprit is sunburn. Dogs, cats and even horses are prone to sunburn and possible skin cancer on noses, ear tips and around eyes. Light coated, pink-nosed animals are at greatest risk, but check with your veterinarian about providing sun protection for your pet.

If your pet’s nose remains consistently dry then make sure they are assessed for possible allergens. More of a concern than just a dry nose however would be a lesion, changes in texture or colour, or discharge/bleeding from the nose and any of these should be thoroughly checked by your vet.



# A TIRED DOG IS A HAPPY DOG

While this old saying is not necessarily always accurate, every dog needs a physical outlet to burn up extra energy and maintain health and fitness.

Regular exercise can improve your dog’s mental health and reduce the occurrence of destructive behaviours done out of anxiety or boredom.

However, how much exercise is enough depends on your dog’s age, breed, and health. Active breeds need a minimum of 30 minutes of hard aerobic exercise most days of the week, preferably daily. For smaller indoor breeds, it’s important to realise that they don’t necessarily get enough exercise inside the house so it’s vital to set time aside to actively play with them. Some pet owners also make the mistake of assuming that if a dog has access to outside, they’re getting exercise.

But your dog won’t run laps alone in your garden - it’s the interaction with you that counts! If the weather doesn’t allow outside exercise then stay indoors and throw toys, run up the stairs together or teach tricks to keep your dog’s mind engaged. And don’t forget that geriatric dogs still need to exercise....just a bit less than before.

Remember to tailor the exercise to meet their specific needs and keep them engaged. Exercising regularly with your pooch is vital to help control their weight and maintain a healthy body and mind. Plus, as a bonus, it gives you those benefits too!



## PRACTICE UPDATE

Congratulations to Dr Byron and wife Jacqui! We are very excited to announce the birth of their baby daughter, Lila June, born on 12th September, a healthy 7lb5oz. Byron has spent a lovely month at home discovering the new joys of fatherhood!



Byron and beautiful Lila



Luna getting ready for Halloween

Nurse Bec has a gorgeous new edition to her four-legged family, Luna, an adorable black Pug puppy! She is receiving plenty of cuddles, pop in and say hi, she welcomes all visitors!

**Drs Andrew and Wendy** have recently returned from a relaxing week in Bali. Plenty of r & r was enjoyed soaking up the sun in the quiet north east fishing village Amed.

We farewell senior nurse, **Lydia**. We are sad to see her leave after 2 years at North Road, she has taken on an exciting and challenging position at Sydney University Veterinary School in the ICU teaching hospital. We wish her well in her future career endeavours.

Two new nurses have joined North Road, **Julianne and Tennille**. Julianne is a trainee vet nurse, and Tennille has over 10 years nursing experience. Welcome to the team!

Summer is here and **dog grooming** is entering into a very busy period. Grooming appointments with Clea need to be made well in advance in order to secure a booking, so please don’t leave booking your pooch’s hair day to the last minute.



A day in our parlour

Across: 1. Brown 5. Dozing 6. Cats 8. Exercise 9. Lip 10. Walking.  
Down: 2. Whiskers 3. Play 4. Nose 7. Training.

## ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD