



Ellie's Story



The first seven weeks of Ellie's life were not the best but with the help from a kind foster mum she survived and eventually came to live with us aged fifteen weeks. In December 1995 with the ground covered in snow Ellie was introduced to her new family, needless to say it really was 'love all around'. Ellie's first night set the pattern for the rest of her life with us - her baby squeaks from her bed in the kitchen ensured that she was carried upstairs to the

bedroom that night - needless to say she never slept downstairs again!

The snow held no terrors for this little cocker spaniel. With her beautiful black and white coat it meant she could skip like a lamb and not be found too easily! Her ability to crawl underneath shrubbery became apparent when she used to hide under the willow tree in our garden. The delight at seeing her first Christmas tree was wonderful to watch especially when she thought the decoration was a ball just for her! No chair was too high as Ellie mastered any obstacles very quickly - her climbing ability ensured a comfortable seat for which a cocker spaniel must always aim! This also applied to the garden - most of the flowers made ex-



tremely soft seats and sometimes even tasted good! Ellie was affectionately called "me too" as she came everywhere with us and had no intention of staying at home. Car journeys often resembled moving house as all her rugs, towels, toys and water came too!

Unfortunately on 5 March 2008 aged twelve years and seven months Ellie passed away in our arms without suffering. She gave us all so much love and joy and

Yvonne and Jacqui Morrison

we fulfilled our promise to love and care for her.

Ellie by Jacqui
You came to us as a little one
So happy and full of zest
The snow lay on the ground
We knew you were the best

No more socks for us to lose
We loved you our "Twinkle Toes
Two Shoes"
What an impact on our lives you made



And our memories of you will never fade.

Golden Oldies



We would all like our pets to live forever and when you have a special bond with them it is a terrible thought that it may not be with us for as long as you would wish. So, it is worthwhile trying to take care of your pet in the later years and, similar to humans, the

care of the elderly requires special diets and the recognition that some bits begin to wear out. Rather than accepting it as old age these worn bits can often be treated. Animals can get senile dementia, become more insecure and begin to behave oddly, like staring at the ceiling or barking inappropriately and over reacting to unfamiliar situations. This is where antioxidants and drugs to improve the circulation in the brain can help. Some manufacturers will provide a special diet for this (e.g. Hills Nutrition) and drugs are available from the vet on prescription.

Deafness is also common and due to the

same reasons in humans, a hardening of small bones in the middle ear causes dogs to respond less to sound when they get above 7 years old, which in dog terms is the beginning of old age.

Another big age related problem, as in humans, is arthritis and mostly results from wear and tear in the joints. The active (or hyperactive) dog will put pressures on the joints and this is exacerbated with overweight. It is so important to get the weight checked regularly and feed less, or use a low calorie food to get overweight dogs back to normal and save not only the joints but heart and liver and so improve the general well being.



Talking of hearts, the older the dog the more likely the heart will have problems. A

Ian Millar BVMS, CertVOphthal, MRCVS

dog which seems to tire easily, begin to cough and even collapse could have heart related problems. We can diagnose heart disease with the same detail as if it were a human patient and the sophisticated ECG and echo scanning machines pinpoint the problem and we can then prescribe the medicine for it. Some of these are specific for animals and others might be the same as people use.

The kidneys will often wear out and a common reason for your dog drinking more with older age can be Chronic Kidney Failure (a slow deterioration of the kidney's ability to keep the blood clean). Early diagnosis gives you a chance to manage the problem because, although it cannot be cured, animals can cope very well on the right food and support medications.

So with correct feeding and paying attention to the detail and early warning signs of disease your pet can reach healthy ages unheard of 30 years ago.

Behavioural problems in dogs – Part 1

D. J. Thompson OBE, BA, MVB, MRCVS

This article deals with one of the most common behavioural problems which occurs in dogs - aggression against people and aggression against other dogs



It is a little known fact that more dogs are destroyed

because of behavioural problems rather than illness. In most cases this is because of poor management as puppies rather than inherited factors but there is undoubtedly an inherited factor involved and some dogs are naturally dominant and want to be leaders, whereas at the other end of the scale others are subservient and are happy to be followers.

When dealing with dogs which are aggressive to people, the most important factor to consider is the safety of people and particularly children. While I have no hesitation in saying that a high proportion of aggressive dogs can safely be controlled, all the circumstances must be taken into consideration when giving advice. We do not live in a risk free society but if there is a significant risk to human safety then euthanasia must be accepted as being one possible solution. This is particularly relevant when dealing with strong dogs and young children. Advice when the puppy is young is very important and it is almost always possible to significantly influence the dog's temperament between the ages of 3 - 12 weeks. There are

major advantages in the socialisation in puppies before they reach the age of 12 weeks. Prevention of bad habits is infinitely easier than finding a cure. Unfortunately a higher proportion of rescue dogs are more likely to have behavioural problems because most will not have had the benefit of controlled socialisation.

Aggression in dogs can be divided into three main types - predatory, dominance and fear aggression. Treatment will vary depending on the cause but the same principles apply to all three.

Predatory aggression is the most difficult to treat because it is based in some instances on the dog's natural instinct to hunt and possibly to kill its prey. It is directed mainly

against smaller or weaker animals and is the main reason for that horrible scourge of the countryside, sheep worrying.

Dominance is the most common cause of aggression in dogs and can be directed against humans as well as other animals. Dominant dogs will be likely to bite when they are challenged or confronted, e.g., if they do not like to be moved off a chair, if they do not like their food being taken from them, if they do not like to be patted or handled near their rear end, and generally do not like to be made to do anything that does not suit them.

In these situations dominant dogs will usually only bite those to whom they consider as subordinate and this will invariably include the owner.

(to be continued in Part 2)

Facts about your Rabbit

Heather Smith MVB MRCVS

Rabbits are sociable little animals and make great pets. They have a relatively long life span of 6-10 years and there are over 65 breeds. Rabbits do like to have a companion, however neutering of multiple groups is recommended to stop fighting or unwanted litters.

Rabbits can live outdoors- in a hutch raised from the ground to protect them from rodents and dampness. Also, they can be kept indoors and trained to use a litter tray. Diet is mainly complete pellet based, but rabbits should always have free access to hay or grass to prevent dental and digestive disorders. Foods to avoid include potatoes, rhubarb or tomato leaves, bread, breakfast cereal. Rabbit handling should be relaxed



and quiet. Start by stroking at floor level and lift with support under the hind legs, as rabbits can easily sustain spinal injuries during a struggle. Common rabbit ailments that require a veterinary visit include:

Tooth problems- You may notice weight loss, a wet chin or dropping of food.

Fly strike- Common in outdoor rabbits during the summer. Fly eggs are laid in the tissue around the rabbit's bottom and can hatch into maggots. Fly strips and a clean hutch can help discourage flies.

Pasteurella multocida- causes snuffles, sneezing and nasal discharge. This disease may progress into pneumonia which can be fatal.

Myxomatosis- causes puffy eyes and swellings around the face/ears/genitals. Virtually all rabbits die as a result so they should be vaccinated for the disease.

Viral haemorrhagic disease- again is deadly and infectious so vaccination is recommended. Symptoms are usually lack of appetite, bleeding and a high temperature. Rabbits should visit the vet at least once yearly for vaccination boosters and a routine health check.

Itchy Pets?



The selection of flea products, size and usage can be complicated, and have effects on your pet's health. It is therefore beneficial to seek advice from your veterinary surgeon on a programme that best suits you and your pet.

Meet our Staff



Ian Millar BVMS, CertVOphthal, MRCVS was born in Sussex and was one of four children. From a Scottish farming background, he chose to become a Vet and trained at Glasgow University.

After qualifying in 1976 he moved to Fivemiletown in Northern Ireland and later met Anne who was working as a Veterinary Nurse at Earls-

wood Veterinary Hospital. After getting married they worked for a short time in South Africa before returning home to Belfast. He started working in Earlswood Veterinary Hospital in 1980, which means he has over thirty two years General Practice experience. He obtained his CertVOphthal in 1984 and has a special interest in ophthalmology, radiography

and soft tissue surgery. Ian provides general and referral consultations in all these areas. In addition to his general veterinary work, Ian also sits on the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Eye Panel which monitors all inherited eye diseases.

Ian now lives in Newtownards with his wife Anne and four children, and owns a huge array of pets including three cats and two dogs!