



Cancer: are you an optimist or a pessimist?

One of the joys of being a veterinary surgeon for the last 30 years is that I am always learning, and over recent weeks I have been challenged by some cancer cases. Here are few bullet points from what clients have said to me:

- Surely there must be a blood test that detects cancer? *Sorry, there is not.*
- 'You must be able to tell if my dog has cancer?' *Sorry the diagnosis is sometimes very complex, and it is sometimes not a clear cut yes he has it or no she does not.*
- 'I don't want him to suffer.'

Medical advances have been running along at quite a rate over the past 20 years, but there are still a large number of things that we do not know, and this means that dealing with medical uncertainties is a daily occurrence. This is where the skills of the general practitioner are extended to the frontiers, and this is why the job of being a general practitioner for animals and their clients is so challenging, sometimes stressful, but often rewarding.



The object of clients and vets is to give the animals entrusted to our care the best quality of life, and the best choices for a long and happy life. Sometimes the optimism within our human spirit is rewarded when the extensive diagnostic workup and treatment



Arthritis alert!

OSTEOARTHRITIS (or arthritis as it is often known) is a condition where cartilage in the joint is damaged or destroyed. Cartilage covers the ends of the bone, protecting them by acting as a shock absorber, so when it is destroyed this causes pain and inflammation in the joint. It is a very common condition in older patients and can cause loss of mobility, lameness and stiffness which reduces your pet's quality of life. However with veterinary treatment we can help your pet to have a more comfortable life.



Signs of Arthritis: The following signs are often seen in animals with arthritis: • Difficulty getting up after resting or starting in the morning • Limping • Stiffness after exercise • Difficulty getting in the car or going up stairs. If your pet's signs worsen please contact us and arrange an appointment to see the vet.

Controlling your pet's arthritis: Although arthritis cannot usually be cured, the good news is that we now have a great range of options to help your pet. There are five important components of our arthritis management plan to help control your pet's arthritis: **1** Medication, **2** Supplementation, **3** Exercise, **4** Weight control, **5** Diet.

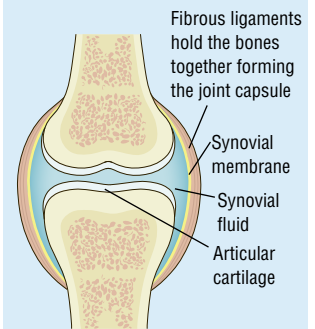
In addition to weight loss, exercise and medication with prescription medicines, we have some great deals on Synoquin which is a leading product for animals containing glucosamine and chondroitin for the care of joints. Our prices on Synoquin are really great, and you can also use our loyalty scheme with these prices so that after you have bought 5 pots at Astonlee you can obtain one free (see reception for details).

perhaps including complex surgery is rewarded with the good quality of life of our patient and friend, and sometimes the pessimism that the outcome would not have been good leaves us with some doubts. The decision involved in whether or not to go through the diagnostics and treatment can be very complex, but I have the optimism that together we vets and clients can work this out, and indeed have done for many years, so that between us we can do the very best for our animals. We need that

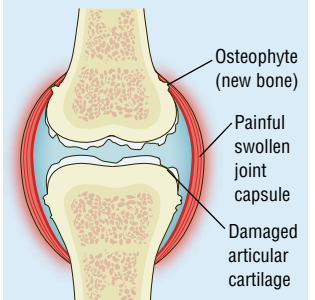
courage and strength to pursue best practice, and to live with our decisions which do challenge us. Working through those challenges which go deep into our decision making processes is where we need optimism, because without that inner strength we would never try, and that would do our animal patients no good at all.
Paul Manning.



Joint Anatomy



Healthy synovial joint with smooth articular cartilage



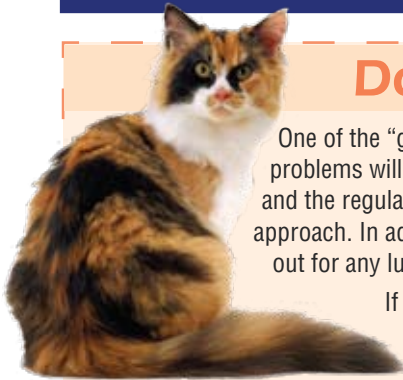
Arthritic synovial joint with damaged articular cartilage

Great deals on Synoquin!

Prices correct at the time of writing:

Synoquin Cat x 120	£39.74
Synoquin Small Dog x 120	£39.74
Synoquin Medium Dog x 120	£46.37
Synoquin Large Dog x 120	£56.58

The above prices include VAT.



Don't ignore that lump!

One of the "golden rules" of veterinary practice is that early detection of problems will generally give us a much better chance of sorting things out and the regular health examinations we give your pet are a key part of this approach. In addition, frequent grooming allows *you* to keep a watchful eye out for any lumps, bumps, fleas, ticks and a host of other problems!

If your pet develops a lump there may be several possible underlying causes. These include allergic reactions (such as bee stings), abscesses, hernias and tumours. The most serious of these are tumours; these may be either *benign* – which tend to be slow growing and remain in one place, or *malignant* – which are frequently fast growing and spread to distant parts of the body.

If you do find a lump it is therefore very important we examine it as soon as possible – in order that we may establish the underlying cause and start any required treatment without delay. If you are concerned about a lump on your pet – or any other health problem, don't delay – please contact us today for an appointment!



Skin lump on the elbow of a cat



Shape up!

OBSESITY is a problem that affects pets and humans alike, and just like us, carrying extra weight places extra demands on virtually all the organs of the body. Excess weight can lead to or worsen many medical conditions including:

- joint and ligament problems,
- heart disease,
- increased blood pressure,
- diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes),
- breathing difficulties,
- decreased stamina and heat intolerance – to name just a few!

Sadly, affected pets often become old before their time, have a diminished quality of life and a reduced life expectancy.

You can tell if your pet is overweight by feeling their chest – the ribs should be felt easily – but not seen, and dogs and cats should have a 'waist' between ribs and hips. If you feel your pet is getting a little portly we are happy to weigh him or her and advise you on their ideal weight. We will also examine your pet to check for any medical conditions (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged dogs) that can result in weight gain.

To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around $\frac{2}{3}$ their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly.

Our FREE NURSE WEIGHT CLINICS will help your pet lose weight. Please contact us for further details!



Winter worries!



IT IS that wonderful time of year again with winter walks, roaring fires and celebrations. As the chilly weather and festivities begin we've got a few tips to keep your pet healthy.

Firstly – when out and about, remember that whilst many dogs love playing in the cold and snow, slim fine coated breeds will find it much harder to conserve their body heat. Also beware of hazards such as frozen ponds and lakes.

Pets that live outside (such as pet rabbits and guinea pigs) need special consideration at this time of year. It is important to ensure that their hutches are warm, clean, dry and in a sheltered position. Bedding needs to be plentiful and changed daily; give them fresh food and water every day and check the water bottle regularly to ensure it has not become frozen.

Inside the home, don't forget that Christmas decorations such as ribbons and tinsel are often attractive to kittens and puppies – and if swallowed may lead to an intestinal blockage. Similarly make sure that turkey carcasses and string (used to tie up the carcass) are safely disposed of.

Beware also of other household hazards: dogs are particularly fond of chocolate (see box right), but this can prove lethal. In addition, there are now several reports confirming that dogs eating even fairly small quantities of raisins, grapes and sultanas can develop renal failure. Many pets

love to chew on house plants, however many of these are toxic to pets. Lilies pose a particular hazard to *cats* – with all parts of the plant including the pollen being toxic.

Finally fleas don't take winter holidays – so keep up your regular flea treatments!



What's bugging you?

With the warm weather just a distant memory, it can be tempting to take a pause in the battle to keep your pets and your home flea free! However take a look at the picture on the right – these are **flea eggs** at 10x magnification!

Adult female fleas can lay in excess of 50 eggs per day – thus even a brief infestation can result in (literally!) thousands of eggs being produced. These fall off your pet and are deposited around your home in carpets and bedding where they can lie dormant for up to a year or more before developing into adult fleas.

Chocolate alert!

Most dogs love chocolate, but as well as being very fattening, it also contains a naturally occurring substance called theobromine which is poisonous to dogs (but not humans you'll be relieved to know!)

The theobromine content, and hence the toxicity of the chocolate, varies according to the type of chocolate with plain chocolate the most dangerous. So if you *must* feed your dog chocolate, specially formulated pet chocolate is the safe option!

