

Vaccinating Your Cat

Vaccination offers the most effective way of protecting your cat throughout their life against many of the most serious infectious and fatal diseases.

These include:

- Feline Panleucopenia (also known as Feline Distemper or Feline Infectious Enteritis)
- Cat Flu (also known as Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis)
- Feline Leukaemia (FeLV)

In the first few weeks of life, kittens are normally protected against disease by antibodies (immunity) from their mother's milk. This decreases over time and has usually disappeared by 12 weeks of age.

Vaccination then protects your kitten against disease. They receive a course of 2 vaccinations, one at 8 weeks of age and then again at 12 weeks to ensure their immune system has the best chance of mounting a strong, protective response.

After 12 months the immunity levels drop and a regular, annual booster is required to maintain the highest possible level of protection against serious disease. This should be continued throughout your cat's life.

Feline Panleucopenia

Feline Panleucopenia is characterised by:

- Severe vomiting
- Anorexia
- Fever
- Death especially in kittens and unborn kittens in an infected cat's womb

The virus is a very serious disease with a high risk of death in infected kittens and young cats. The virus is very similar to the one that causes parvovirus in dogs. **All unvaccinated cats at any age are at risk.**

Infected cats spread the virus in their urine and faeces. The virus is extremely hardy and persists in the environment for many months or years. Infection can occur by contact with an infected cat or environment or inside the mother's womb by the virus passing across the placenta from the mother, if she is infected while pregnant.

Cat Flu

Cat Flu is characterised by:

- Sneezing
- Nasal discharge
- Conjunctivitis
- Discharge from the eyes
- Loss of appetite
- Fever and depression
- Mouth and eye ulcers and excessive drooling are seen

- Young kittens can have lameness and fever

Cat flu is still extremely common despite the important contribution made by vaccination. Despite its name the causes of cat flu are no relation to human influenza. Cat flu is caused by one or more viruses, most commonly Feline Calicivirus and Feline Herpesvirus.

Young kittens and elderly cats are at risk from developing severe pneumonia and dying from infection.

The viruses are relatively sturdy and can survive in the environment for several days. Common forms of infection are by direct contact, sneezing and inhaling infected droplets and direct contact with contaminated environment eg clothing and food bowls. Contact with a cat who is a 'carrier' of cat flu is also a source of infection. This is a cat which is not showing any signs of the disease but sheds the virus throughout its life.

Feline Leukaemia (FeLV)

Feline Leukaemia is characterised by vague and non-specific signs which can take months or years to develop:

- Off colour
- Poor appetite
- Chronic or recurring problems such as diarrhoea
- Slow to recover from minor infections
- Tumour development
- Anaemia

Feline leukaemia virus is almost always fatal and there is no cure. The infection weakens the immune system causing destruction of white blood cells, leaving your cat open to infection. Anaemia and eventually cancer usually develop.

The virus is spread mainly via saliva for example mutual grooming or sharing food bowls. Also fighting, mating or contact with urine and faeces containing the virus will spread the disease.

All cats are considered to be at risk especially young cats and kittens.

The vast majority of cats spend some time outside and are at risk of coming into contact with infection of any one of these diseases either directly or indirectly.

If your cat is a true indoor cat ie does not even venture out into the garden please discuss vaccination with your veterinary surgeon.

At your cat's routine booster vaccination appointment, your vet will also perform a thorough healthcheck to ensure your cat is fit and well. These healthchecks are vital to allow us to spot any problems early on and to offer help with routine healthcare issues.

Useful links:

Vaccination and Your Kitten

Vaccinating Your Older Cat

Pregnancy In Cats

Before Breeding

Before attempting to breed from your pet, there are a number of points which we recommend you consider.

- Can you afford the extra costs involved in maintaining a healthy pregnancy?
- Should complications arise during delivery, could you afford an emergency caesarean section? Do you have the knowledge or experience required to recognise when complications are occurring?
- Can you afford the initial vaccinations, flea and worm treatments that the new arrivals will require?
- Do you have responsible owners who will purchase or rehome the kittens?
- Are you aware that after the costs involved with responsible breeding, there is very little profit to be made with the sale of kittens?
- Is your queen in good health? Does she have any congenital defects? eg. a heart condition
- Is your queen fully vaccinated and up to date with worm and flea treatments?
- Can you afford the conditions that may arise from an entire queen? For example a pyometra (infection of the uterus) is potentially fatal if not treated. If presented with a pyometra your pet will generally require an emergency hysterectomy.

If you feel that the answer is 'no' to any of these questions then please reconsider breeding from your pet.

Feline Reproduction

Female cats are 'polyestrous' which means that they will come into season periodically throughout the year until they are mated or neutered. Queens in season will be very vocal and they are likely to appear very friendly, overly rubbing around objects and rolling on the floor. As cats are generally allowed to roam freely a queen will very easily attract a 'tom cat' and will quickly become pregnant if not kept indoors away from unneutered male cats.

Pregnancy

Feline pregnancy can last for approximately 64 to 65 days but timings may be varied as much as 56 to 72 days depending at what stage of your queen's cycle she was mated.

Signs to look for are:

- Weight gain
- Lack of appetite and vulval discharge (common in the first month)
- Enlargement and reddening of the mammary glands (usually from around day 40)
- On some occasions there is milk production (from day 40)

Care of the queen during pregnancy

The queen's food intake will need to be increased from around day 30, not before as this will only

cause unnecessary weight gain. She will need to be fed little and often due to the reduction in the queen's stomach capacity by the pressure of her uterus. A good quality kitten diet will provide the extra calories she requires. At Cinque Ports Vets we recommend feeding the Royal Canin Nutrition range.

You do not need to supplement Vitamin D or Calcium as long as you provide a good quality diet.

Roundworms are transmitted from the mother to her kittens via her milk, therefore it is important to worm your cat to prevent infection of the kittens. The kittens should be wormed from 2 weeks of age and it is important to make sure the mother is wormed at the same time as the kittens until they are weaned.

Prepare a quiet, warm, clean and dry area for the queen to give birth

Signs of impending labour

- The rectal temperature of the queen will drop from around 39°C to 37°C. It is good practice to keep a record of her temperature daily in the last week of pregnancy.
- The queen will show signs of restlessness and nest making
- There will be an increase in the discharge from her vulva
- She will have a lack of appetite and may vomit, pant and shiver
- As contractions begin fluid will leak from the vulva (waters breaking)

It can be as little as 10 to 30 minutes from the onset of contractions to birth. Once a kitten has been born the queen will begin to lick and remove the membrane surrounding it. Sometimes with first time mums encouragement may be required. Using a soft clean towel to rub the kittens often helps. The queen should also sever the umbilical cord. If this does not occur you will need to cut it with a clean pair of scissors around an inch from the kittens' abdomen. Neonates cannot regulate their own temperature so you will need to ensure that mum and kittens are in a warm environment at all times.

After all the kittens are delivered it is normal for a greenish discharge to be present. This should decline after a week.

If you see any of the following things or you are at all concerned you should contact your local branch of Cinque Ports Vets.

- If the queen's rectal temperature has declined over 48 hours but with no signs of labour
- If the pregnancy is lasting longer than 68 days from mating
- If the queen is straining infrequently and then ceases
- If there has been more than 45 minutes of contractions but no foetus has been delivered
- If there is over a 2 hour interval between the delivery of foetuses
- If a foetus presents with its rear from the vulva but with no hind limbs showing
- If there is a black/green discharge before labour begins

Care of the queen and her kittens

After giving birth the queen can be offered a light meal, though she may have eaten the placentas and may have slight gastric discomfort. She will spend the next 2 weeks caring for her kittens constantly. From 3 weeks onwards the kittens will start to wander around and leave their mum for short periods of time to investigate and explore their surroundings.

Click on the video below to find out more about feeding your kitten.

Cat Worming - Roundworms and Tapeworms

What are worms?

The two types of worms that commonly affect your dog and cat are roundworms (*Toxocara*) and tapeworms. The most common type of tapeworm is *Dipylidium caninum*. However there are other types of worms called lungworms, hookworms and whipworms that can also infect our pets and so treatment and prevention of these is also important.

Roundworms



As their name implies, these are worms which have round bodies. They are the most common intestinal worm in dogs and cats and they are present in most puppies and kittens. The worms consume partially digested food in the intestines of our pets and produce microscopic eggs which are then passed in our pet's faeces. Puppies and kittens with roundworms may expel whole worms as well as eggs into their faeces when young.

How does my pet get roundworms?

Infected animals pass roundworms eggs into the environment from their faeces. Even after the faeces has disappeared the eggs can survive in the environment for up to 3 years. Dogs and cats snuffling in the grass will swallow these eggs and become infected. They will also become infected from eating infected rodents. Once the eggs have been ingested they develop into adult worms inside your pet which then shed more eggs into the environment and the cycle continues. Puppies and kittens may already be infected before birth from their mother or via their mother's milk during nursing.

What problems do roundworms cause?

Large numbers can cause weight loss and a pot-bellied appearance to puppies and kittens and weakness or general ill health in adults. Decreased appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea may be seen. If there are too many worms in the bowel of a puppy or kitten, they can cause a blockage and consequently death. Roundworms are harmful to people and children are at particular risk if infected. A variety of organs may be affected but the main danger is if the larvae migrate to the eye where they can cause blindness.

How do you treat and prevent roundworms?

Regular worming stops your pet from shedding eggs into the environment, helping to reduce the risks of other people and pets becoming infected. It is very important to implement a strict worming

program for your pet even if there are no signs of infestation. We advise worming every two weeks until they are twelve weeks of age and then once every three months on a regular basis for life with a multiwormer. The wormers we use at the veterinary surgery are broad spectrum and will generally treat all types of worms. Often supermarket or pet shop wormers will only cover one or two types of worms and therefore if your pet is infected with a different type of worm then the treatment will not be effective.

Other ways you can protect your pets are:

Making sure as a responsible pet owner that you clear up your pet's faeces and discourage dogs from toileting in areas normally used by children. The eggs are often highly resistant to most common disinfectants and to harsh environmental conditions so removal of faeces is the most effective means of preventing reinfection.

Good hygiene routines are very important for example washing your pet's bedding and feeding bowls regularly. It is also important to wash our hands and educate children to wash theirs after playing with animals and not to let dogs lick faces.

Pregnant dogs should be wormed in late pregnancy. This will help to reduce potential contamination of the environment for the puppies. All new puppies should be treated by 2 -3 weeks of age and then as mentioned previously.

Tapeworms

These worms live in the small intestine of our pets attaching themselves to the wall by hook-like mouthparts. They can reach up to 20cm in length and are made up of many small segments carrying eggs. As the worm matures these break off and pass into your pet's faeces. Sometimes these rice-like segments can be seen crawling near your pet's anus or on the surface of their faeces.

How does my pet get tapeworms?

Infected animals pass tapeworm eggs into the environment from their faeces, where they survive for up to a year. Tapeworm eggs can also be eaten by fleas where the eggs continue development. The fleas are then ingested when your pet grooms themselves and the flea is swallowed. As the flea is digested in their intestines, the tapeworm hatches and anchors itself to their intestinal lining. Tapeworm eggs can also be swallowed by sheep, cattle or rabbits as they graze and if pets are allowed to feed on their carcasses they may become infected.

What problems do tapeworms cause?

Segments from the worm can cause irritation around your pet's anal area and this can lead to 'scooting' along the ground. In large numbers they may cause debilitation and general ill health. Occasionally if a tapeworm loses its attachment in their intestines it may move into your pet's stomach and can then be vomited up. Tapeworms are infectious to people although it is quite rare. A flea must be ingested for humans to become infected with the most common type of tapeworm. Therefore flea control is the best way to prevent human infection. One less common group of tapeworms called Echinococcus (hydatids) is a particular threat to human health and can cause serious disease when humans are infected. Sheep and humans are the final host. This disease only occurs in particular areas of the UK, mainly large rural farming areas such as Wales.

How do you treat and prevent tapeworm?

Treatment is often the same preparation that is also effective against roundworms. Hygiene and

other precautions as explained before with roundworms are also required. In particular effective control of fleas is important in the management and prevention of tapeworms. Flea control involves treatment of your pets, the indoor environment and any outdoor environment where your pets may reside. If your pet lives in a flea-infested environment, reinfection may occur in as little as two weeks. As veterinary supplied medication is very effective, return of the tapeworms is almost always due to reinfection of the environment not failure of the product.

Please click on the video below to watch a video on 'How Profender Works.'

Useful links:

www.drontalandadvantage.co.uk

www.it'sajungle.co.uk

ESCCAP Leaflet - Are you at risk from parasites?

Neutering Your Female Cat -Spay

What is spaying?

This operation involves removal of the entire uterus (womb) and ovaries via an incision usually made on your cat's left flank or midline into their abdomen. Your cat will be admitted as a 'day patient' and following a pre-operative check by your veterinary surgeon, she will be given a pre-medication and analgesic (pain killing) injection prior to her general anaesthetic. After surgery and following her recovery from the anaesthetic she will be ready to go home later the same day. You will be given full discharge instructions on how best to care for your cat after surgery and she will be checked by your veterinary nurse 3 days later to ensure the wound is healing. If there are any sutures present these will be removed 10 days later. While the operation is more complicated than castration, it is still a routine procedure and their recovery is usually fairly quick.

What are the advantages of spaying?

Spaying has a number of advantages especially if performed between 4-6 months of age.

Unwanted kittens-Most obviously spaying prevents unwanted litters. There are thousands of unwanted kittens and cats that need homes due to irresponsible owners who do not neuter their cats.

Behavioural-Cats are 'spontaneous ovulators' which means your cat will only ovulate (release her eggs) if she is mated. If she comes into season and is not mated she will come back into season every couple of weeks until she is. Due to physiological and behavioural patterns she will try to seek out male cats and may attempt to escape from the house in an attempt to do this. She will also attract male cats into the area. During her season she will be 'calling' and displaying unsociable behaviour which is often loud, persistent crying and rolling around on the floor.

Prevent spread of diseases- Mating and fighting can also spread diseases like FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and FeLV (Feline Leukaemia Virus) which can be

fatal.

Medical-Spaying prevents the chance of infection of their uterus (pyometra) and greatly reduces the incidence of mammary (breast) cancer.

Are there any disadvantages?

The operation carries a small risk associated with general anaesthesia. Your cat will be assessed prior to surgery to ensure she is fit and well for the procedure, and full instructions will be given when she goes home to minimise the chances of a problem occurring with the wound.

It is a common fallacy that a neutered cat will become fat and lazy. They may have a decreased activity level following neutering, which in turn causes weight gain **IF** your cat continues to be fed the same amount of food as before they were neutered. Neutered pets can require up to a 30% reduction in their feeding requirements. This is due to no longer utilising energy in to reproduction. This extra energy may then be stored as excess body fat instead.

After your cat is neutered, we recommend moving her onto a neutered cat food. Royal Canin have developed a competitively priced, veterinary exclusive pet food which is high in protein and low in fat to help combat against any weight gain. Your veterinary nurse will be able to advise you on the best feeding regime for your cat.

Royal Canin also have an S/O Index with their food which is an abbreviation for struvite and calcium oxalate crystals. The S/O Index indicates that the food helps provide a urinary environment unfavourable to the development of struvite and calcium oxalate crystals.

These crystals can cause blockages in male cats due to their narrow, long urethra. In females blockages are less of a problem but can still occur.

Click on the video below to find out more about why you should neuter your cat.

Useful links:

www.royalcanin.co.uk

Neutering Your Male Cat - Castration

What is castration?

The operation involves surgical removal of both testicles via two small incisions in your cat's scrotal sacs. It is a straightforward operation performed under general anaesthesia. Your cat will be admitted as a 'day patient' and following a pre-operative check by your veterinary surgeon, he will be given a pre-medication and analgesic (pain killing) injection prior to his general anaesthetic. After surgery and following his recovery from the anaesthetic he will be ready to go home later the same day. You will be given full discharge instructions on how best to care for your cat after surgery. We usually don't need to recheck your cat after castration unless you have any concerns. There aren't any sutures to worry about and the wounds heal over very quickly as long as there is no interference with the area!

What are the advantages of castration?

Castration has a number of advantages especially if performed between 4-6 months of age.

Unwanted kittens- Most obviously castration prevents unwanted litters. There are thousands of unwanted kittens and cats that need homes due to irresponsible owners who do not neuter their cats.

Behavioural problems- Unneutered male cats or 'tom cats' can also develop a number of unwanted characteristics. For example they may become territorial and start spraying urine to mark areas, often in the house. By puberty their urine has often developed a very strong smell and is extremely difficult to remove. If they are allowed to venture outside they will start to stray further from home and come into contact with other cats. This is likely to lead to cat fights which result in wounds which can become infected and abscessed. Unneutered males also tend to be prone to being involved in road traffic accidents especially at night as they are out and about marking their territory and looking for females.

Prevent spread of diseases- Mating and fighting can also spread diseases like FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and FeLV (Feline Leukaemia Virus) which can be fatal.

Medical- Normally cats have two testicles present in their scrotal sac by the time they are neutered but it is not uncommon to have retained testicles (cryptorchidism). This is a condition where by one or both of the testicles have failed to move into the scrotum and are still in your cat's groin or abdomen. When the testicles are retained they are at a higher temperature than in the scrotum. This leads to infertility and an increased likelihood of the testicle becoming cancerous. Removal of the testicle(s) is therefore still recommended but the operation may be a bit more complicated as the abdomen may need to be entered.

Are there any disadvantages?

The operation carries a small risk associated with general anaesthesia. Your cat will be assessed prior to surgery to ensure he is fit and well for the procedure, and full instructions will be given when he goes home to minimise the chances of a problem occurring with the wound.

It is a common fallacy that a neutered cat will become fat and lazy. They may have a decreased activity level following neutering, which in turn causes weight gain **IF** your cat continues to be fed the same amount of food as before they were neutered. Neutered pets can require up to a 30% reduction in their feeding requirements. This is due to no longer utilising energy in to reproduction. This extra energy may then be stored as excess body fat instead.

After your cat is neutered, we recommend moving him onto a neutered cat food. Royal Canin have developed a competitively priced, veterinary exclusive pet food which is high in protein and low in fat to help combat against any weight gain. Your veterinary nurse will be able to advise you on the best feeding regime for your cat.

Royal Canin also have an S/O Index with their food which is an abbreviation for struvite and calcium oxalate crystals. The S/O Index indicates that the food helps provide a urinary environment unfavourable to the development of struvite and calcium oxalate crystals.

These are crystals which can form in your cat's urine creating urinary problems. The crystals can eventually cause a 'plug' or blockage in your male cat's urethra. It only takes a few crystals to block as the urethra is very narrow and only has a small opening. This is a potentially fatal condition and

will result in death if your cat is not treated due to the urinary toxins building up in the system. This will cause kidney failure in a matter of days or their bladder will eventually burst.

Click on the video below to find out more about why you should neuter your cat.

Useful website:
www.royalcanin.co.uk

Giving Your Cat A Tablet

Here are some hints and tips for administering a tablet to your cat. It can be helpful to have an extra pair of hands to help hold your pet.



Using A Towel



Make sure your cat is as calm and relaxed as possible. Use a large towel and place this over your table.



Wrap your cat in the towel as shown.



Then your cat is ready for medicating as shown.

Manually Restraining



If you prefer to manually restrain your cat make sure they are as calm and relaxed as possible.



Gently and safely hold the forelimbs as shown.



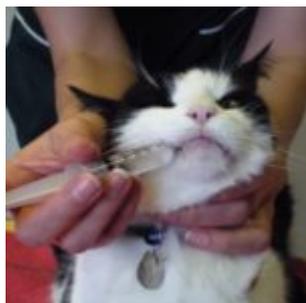
Hold the jaw firmly with the other hand and tip the head back gently. This is where two people can be helpful!



Hold the tablet and open your cat's mouth.



Place the tablet as far back in the mouth as possible.



Release your cat's head and allow them to swallow. Stroking your cat's throat can encourage them to swallow. Syringe a small amount of water after medicating.

If you have any difficulty giving your cat a tablet please let your local branch of Cinque Ports Vets know as they will be happy to help. Veterinary nurses offer free appointments during which they can medicate your cat for you for you.

Click on the video below to see how to tablet a cat.

Ear Infections

Otitis Externa is a term used to describe an infection of the external (outer) ear canal.

The ear is made up of three parts, the inner, middle and outer ear consisting of the vertical and horizontal ear canal.

The vertical canal of the ear is corrugated along its length. At the base of the vertical canal is a right-angled turn where the canal becomes narrower and continues horizontally to the ear drum. The ear drum separates the middle ear from the outer ear. Wax and other substances are continually produced along the entire length of the canal to keep the lining healthy.

Otitis externa can be caused by mites, allergies, yeasts or bacteria. Ear infections can be particularly unpleasant for your pet as the canal is extremely sensitive. Any irritation or wax which occurs due to the infection will cause your pet to scratch at their ear(s) and shake their head trying to dislodge the discomfort. This often causes inflammation and there may be a discharge seen which can be foul smelling. Constant head shaking may even cause an aural haematoma to develop.

Some dogs may be more susceptible than others:

- Floppy eared dogs have limited airflow in the canal creating the ideal environment for bacteria
- Especially hairy ear canals trap dirt and bacteria
- Swimming due to the microorganisms in ponds can cause ear infections
- Skin allergies will also often cause ear infections

Your veterinary surgeon will always recommend that a thorough examination of the ear canal is performed using an otoscope before any medication is prescribed. This is to ensure that the ear drum is intact and to ensure that there are no foreign bodies for example grass seeds which may penetrate further in. If ear drops are applied and the ear drum has ruptured due to the infection, loss of hearing or neurological problems including loss of balance can occur.

Once an examination has been performed, depending on the cause, your veterinary surgeon will prescribe the best course of treatment only available from your veterinary surgeon.



Sometimes a swab of the infection will be taken and sent to an external laboratory for analysis. This is to determine the type of bacteria or yeast causing the problem and which treatment they will best respond to.

If your pet is prone to ear infections or you wish to prevent them from suffering from one, there are some measures you can take at home.

If the canals are especially hairy, regular plucking to remove any clumps of hair can allow better ventilation. Your vet will advise you if this is suitable for your pet.

Regular ear cleaning using a recommended product will dislodge any waxy debris from the base of the canal, bringing it to the surface allowing it to be wiped clean with some cotton wool.

This should be done regularly to prevent ear infections from occurring.

Never poke anything down the ear canal-especially cotton buds as this may cause damage.

Persistent ear infections which cause chronic thickening of the ear canal can sometimes only be

resolved by surgery. The external ear canal is removed and this is called a lateral wall resection. A total ear canal ablation is performed in exceptionally severe cases which is removal of the entire ear canal.

Click on the videos below to see how to apply ear cleaner and medication as well as what ear mites look like in your pet's ear canals!

Dental Care

It is important to start looking after your pet's teeth from an early age, all throughout their life. Imagine how our teeth would look and our breath would smell if we didn't brush our teeth regularly. It is just the same for your pet. Ideally you should begin brushing their teeth between 8 and 12 weeks of age as this enables them to become accustomed to it before their permanent dentition develops- but it is never too late to start!

The brushing motion removes the plaque which builds up on their teeth. It is soft and pasty and not easy to see. It builds up on teeth 24 hours a day and harbours bacteria which infect the gum tissue and roots of the teeth. It also causes bad breath. Unless the plaque is removed on a regular basis their gums can become sore and inflamed.

The plaque eventually calcifies and turns into tartar which is the hard brown material that becomes visible on your pet's teeth. If left, it can lead to periodontal disease and loss of their teeth. The bacteria in plaque can even spread to other parts of the body and have been linked to heart, liver and kidney disease.

Once the tartar is formed it can only be removed by your veterinary surgeon giving your pet a general anaesthetic and removing it using an ultrasonic scaler. Sometimes at this stage some teeth will require removing and the remainder will be polished. Strict aftercare at home will need to be undertaken to prevent another dental procedure being needed.



It is important to use a toothbrush and toothpaste designed for animals as the brush is ultra soft and shaped to fit their mouth and teeth. The toothpaste is flavoured to appeal to animals- fish flavoured for cats and poultry flavoured for dogs. It is also fine to be swallowed unlike human toothpaste which requires rinsing and contains fluoride. The paste contains an ingredient which helps prevent plaque from sticking to your pet's teeth after brushing. A range of kits are available at the veterinary practice.

Your pet's normal diet, especially if tinned, allows for food to stick to their teeth and favours the growth of bacteria found in plaque which is why home dental care is so important. There is a range of dental biscuits, rinses and chews available from the practice which can help along with brushing to keep their teeth clean by limiting dental plaque and tartar formation.

The Royal Canin Dental diet, available for cats and dogs is specially formulated and works by 2 actions:

- **Mechanical action:** the kibble's special texture means that when eaten the tooth will bite right into it. The abrasive effect of contact breaks down dental plaque and disperses bacteria.
- **Biochemical action:** micronised sodium polyphosphate is dispersed into the mouth and traps calcium present in saliva before it can build up on plaque which is present on the teeth. By making the calcium unavailable, tartar formation is delayed.

Small breed dogs are especially susceptible to dental problems, which is why Royal Canin also put sodium polyphosphate in their Vet Care range of diets as well for tartar control.

Chews are also very good at reducing plaque formation but generally they can only clean the prominent areas of your dog's teeth.

To enable your pet to enjoy having their teeth cleaned be patient and take time with the process. Try following these steps and your pet will quickly get used to the process:

Day 1: Gently stroke the outside of your pet's cheeks with your finger only (no brush) and slowly lift their lip for about 30 seconds. Reward, praise and treat at the end of each session.

Day 2: Repeat as above and also place a small amount of toothpaste on the end of your finger and let your pet sample it.

Day 3: Repeat Day 2, but this time, gently run your finger or toothbrush and a small amount of toothpaste over your pet's teeth for 30-45 seconds. Never start at the front of the mouth as this is the most sensitive part. Reward with praise and a treat. It sometimes helps to smear the toothpaste into the brush so your pet does not lick it off straight away!

Day 4: Repeat Day 3 adding 15 seconds to the time running over your pet's teeth. Reward with praise and a treat.

Day 5: Gradually you should be aiming to spend about a minute on each side of their mouth, brushing horizontally for cheek teeth and vertically for their canine teeth.

Ideally try to brush your pet's teeth once a day, usually bedtime is a good time followed by a dental biscuit or chew as a reward.

If you would like more advice on the best way to care for your pet's teeth please speak to your veterinary nurse at your local branch of Cinque Ports Vets.

Useful links:

www.royalcanin.co.uk/downloads/vetlibrary/good_oral_hygiene_in_pets.PDF

Please click on the videos below to watch how to brush your pet's teeth.

Collecting A Urine Sample

Urine analysis is an essential tool in conjunction with blood testing. Urine contains by-products from many organs not just the kidneys themselves and analysis of these products can help interpret how these organs are functioning. The analysis measures various parameters.

A refractometer is used to measure the Specific Gravity. This indicates the urine concentration and helps to tell us if the kidneys are functioning correctly.

A urine dipstick measures substances such as protein, glucose, ketones and blood. The pH of the urine is also measured and this indicates the acidity or alkalinity of the urine.

Lastly the urine is centrifuged to separate the sediment and a microscope slide of the urine is analysed to determine the type and amount of crystals and/ or blood cells present.

How do I collect a urine sample from my cat?

The easiest way to collect a urine sample from your cat is to replace their normal cat litter in their tray with a non-absorbing one. We can supply you with Katkor which are small plastic beads and contain a pipette and collection tube for you to collect the sample in. Ideally once the sample is collected you should bring it in to us as a fresh sample gives us the most accurate results. If you are unable to bring the sample in straight away then it should be refrigerated overnight.

Click on the video below to watch how to collect a urine sample from your cat.

How do I collect a urine sample from my dog?

While you are taking your dog out for a toilet break, slide your collection pot under their stream of urine. A saucer can be ideal for sliding under female dogs when they squat. Your collection pot should be spotlessly clean as any residue can interfere with the test results. We can provide you with a collection pot if needed. Ideally once the sample is collected you should bring it in to us a fresh sample gives us the most accurate results. If you are unable to bring the sample in straight away then it should be refrigerated overnight.