

Wishing all our wonderful clients and patients a joyful Christmas and Happy New Year!

Keeping pets safe and happy at Christmas time:

Christmas is a wonderful time of year and often our furbabies also get into the spirit of Christmas, tucking into delicious Christmas fare with the family. As much as we love our pets and want to give them a treat at Christmas time, it is important to remember that many of the foods we enjoy are hazardous to dogs and cats. Christmas and New Year is our peak period for cases of pancreatitis – usually



Figure 1: Two of our gorgeous patients - Henry and Tuppence - getting into the Christmas spirit!

because dogs have been fed the leftover Christmas ham or sausages off the barbeque. **The problem with very rich foods like ham and sausages is that they are very high in fat which can cause life-threatening inflammation of the pancreas** (symptoms usually include inappetence, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea). Cooked bones can also be a problem, potentially causing bowel obstructions or perforations because they are

at increased risk of splintering when compared with raw bones. Christmas chocolates are also off-limits, as the theobromine contained in milk chocolate and dark chocolate can be lethal to pets in high doses, as can lollies sweetened with xylitol. Other foods to avoid include grapes and raisins (so Christmas pudding is out!), macadamia nuts and onions. **A raw meaty bone is a safe Christmas treat for your dog – if it is extremely hot, you could even freeze the bone to help provide some relief from heat stress.**

Christmas trees can be a disaster if you have a curious cat (like I do!) Cats love Christmas trees, tinsel and baubles and they will not only make a mess, they can also ingest parts of the tinsel, smash the baubles and cut themselves and chew on the Christmas lights resulting in electrocution.

Another challenge for pets at Christmas time is their home suddenly becomes very noisy, busy and in some cases, full of children or strangers they don't know. This can be very overwhelming for a pet, especially if they suffer from anxiety. Some tips to keep them happy during this busy time include:

Give your pet some space of its own so they have a chance to rest and relax. Put them in a room by themselves with something nice to chew or to play with, some water and their bed. Sometimes a boarding kennel or using a pet sitter may be the better alternative for your pet and your peace of mind, especially if you have any concerns with how your dog might interact with your guests. If your guests and their children want to interact with your pet, make sure your pet is comfortable with the handling. Ask your guests to be gentle - dogs often don't feel comfortable with being stared at, hugged or patted on the head. Children should never be handling a dog unsupervised.

Cases of the Month



Tick paralysis

Theileria

Ear Infections

Bladder tumour (cow)

Septicemic Foals

Ovarian Cysts

Infertility investigations

Run Dates



Krambach: every Tuesday

Comboyne: second
Thursday of every month

Thurs 11th January

Thurs 8th February

Oxley Island: fourth
Thursday of every month

Thurs 25th January

Thurs 22nd February

Coopernook, Lansdowne
& Hannam Vale: third
Thursday of every month

Thurs 18th January

Thurs 15th February

To book a job, please call by
5pm the day before a run.

Emergencies will be
accommodated.

Subsidised travel fees.

6557 0000

Christmas & New Year Hours



We will be open every day
over the Christmas and New
Year period, except public
holidays. We also offer a 24-
hour emergency service 365
days a year.

In the spotlight:



We are now offering our clients the convenience of zipPay, a totally interest-free form of payment.

We are happy to announce we are now offering zipPay as an alternative form of payment to our valued clients. ZipPay is a highly convenient 'digital wallet' which offers customers credit of up to \$1000 for products and services, making it a perfect option for pet owners when emergency vet visits crop up. To sign up for zipPay, we can send you an online invite and the entire approval process takes less than 60 seconds. Once approved, the \$1000 balance is always available and can be accessed and then repaid as many times as you like. It is also available to be used at other zipPay providers (such as clothes or toy stores). ZipPay is completely interest free so you will never be charged interest on the amount you owe. Customers have 60 days to pay their zipPay invoice, and if they haven't been able to pay it within the 60 day period, zipPay will charge an account keeping fee of only \$5.00 per month. Once we read through all the terms and conditions and understood the process, we decided that zipPay offer a fantastic product that may appeal to many of our clients, offering some peace of mind so they always have funds available if they need to bring their pets to the vet. If you would like to know more, or would like us to send you an invite to set up a zipPay account, please contact us on 65570000.



Share your pet house rules with your guests. This includes rules like if your pet is allowed on the couch, if certain rooms are off limits, to stay away when your pet eats its food, and so on.

Keep your pet away from Christmas crackers. You don't want them to ingest the small items from crackers.

Protect your pet from loud noise and fireworks. Fireworks can be very scary for your pet. Make sure your pet is in confined in a secure area it can't escape from. Most pet escapes happen during thunderstorms or on New Year's Eve, so make sure the area they are in is secure, ideally insulated from noise and light and has somewhere for them to hide. If your pet has anxiety or responds badly to thunderstorms or fireworks, please contact us to discuss options for managing this. Many of our anxious patients receive a dose of anti-anxiety medication prior to New Year's Eve and it can be highly effective in preventing escapes, destructive tendencies or barking.

Welcoming two new staff members to the team!!

We have been very fortunate to welcome two wonderful vet nurses to the Wingham & Valley Vets team. Amie and Erin work every Saturday morning and one day during the week, so you have probably seen their friendly faces around the practice already. Both Amie and Erin have their Certificate 4 in Veterinary Nursing and grew up in the Manning Valley. Amie and Erin are caring, efficient and very friendly, so they are fantastic assets to the nursing team. They have fit in with us so well, it is like they have worked here for years. We are very pleased to have them on board. Welcome guys!! At the same time, we are also saying goodbye to our lovely TAFE nursing students Courtney, Jess and Bec, who have been with us for the last year. We have greatly enjoyed teaching them and wish them all the best for the future.



Figure 2: Welcome to the team Amie!!

Staff Training Updates

At Wingham & Valley Vets there is always a nurse or vet heading off to a new and exciting course. This is to ensure our knowledge and expertise are always kept up to date, so we can offer our patients the best and most effective diagnostics and treatments. Our accountant informed us that we spend more on staff training than any other clinic of our size in Australia – we consider this to be a badge of honour!! We have a monthly 'vet breakfast' at the delicious Garden Grub café to give the vets the opportunity to discuss cases and share the knowledge they have gained at recent training events. Mick Healy recently commenced the Dairy Australia Countdown Mastitis course. This year long course trains private Dairy

veterinarians in mastitis management and prevention, so they are well-equipped to give expert advice to farmers and assist in preventing and treating mastitis outbreaks. He attended a two-day workshop in Warragul VIC – necessitating a 13-hour 1300km drive each way. Now that's commitment to preventing mastitis!! Luckily, he had some engrossing podcasts to keep him going along the way. Mick is enjoying the course immensely and is looking forward to implementing what he has learned to provide a comprehensive and expert service to local dairy farmers. John Dooley was recently invited by Sydney University's Centre for Veterinary Education to give a lecture at the University for their Seminar for New and Recent Graduates. This seminar is designed to help smooth the path of new graduates into the work force. John was delighted to receive the invitation, and his lecture was very well received.

Pete Rourke is much of the way through his cardiorespiratory medicine course. This course has been a fantastic resource to the practice and has already revolutionised our approach to complicated cardiac and respiratory cases. The cardiorespiratory course has married perfectly with Pete's special interest in ultrasound. Sue Cook has been undertaking a distance education course in diabetes management in dogs and cats. This course has already proven extremely useful, when a dog with diabetic ketoacidosis presented to the clinic the very day after Sue had given a talk to all the vets about what she had learned during her course. That dog is now doing very well, having been stabilised in hospital and is now home on insulin injections. Sue also completed a course in backyard chickens – they make lovely pets and their owners often bring them into us when we are sick. This course helps all the vets treat our poultry patients as effectively as possible.

SUMMER POSES A SIGNIFICANT HEAT STROKE RISK TO PETS

Hot weather is fast approaching so remember to have plenty of shade and fresh water available. Take special precautions with brachycephalic (short nosed) breeds such as pugs and bulldogs as they are at increased risk of heat stroke due to their airway conformation. Frozen bones and treats can be great to keep your pet cool on hot days and remember never to leave your pet inside a car.

For an equine vet, there are few things more satisfying than the arrival of the foal which you helped to create. Gorgeous Adara (see photo on far right) was born recently after her mother was artificially inseminated by Michael at our equine facility last year. Here you can see a photo of the mare's early ultrasound scan, confirming a viable pregnancy only 9mm long:

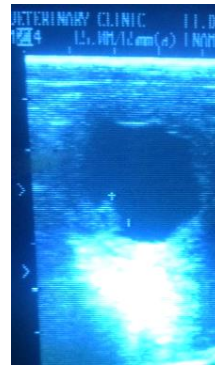
Heat Stress and your Dairy Herd

We recently wrote an article on Heat Stress for the Dairy Advancement Group's quarterly publication "Dairy Doings". Because we feel this is such an important aspect of the Summer-time management of dairy herds, we have included an abridged version of the article here, for any farmers who missed it in Dairy Doings.

How Heat Stress Occurs:

As the ambient environmental temperature rises above 21°C, cows become increasingly reliant on evaporative cooling via panting and sweating. High humidity makes cooling via sweating very ineffective so when it is both hot as well as humid, heat stress results. The temperature humidity index (THI) combines the effects of temperature and humidity into one value. **Milk production is seriously affected once the THI rises above 78.** In very high producing cows, the effects of this THI are even worse- Dairy Australia advises that increasing milk production from 35 to 45 litres per day reduces the threshold temperature for heat stress by 5°C. **A THI of 78 occurs at 31°C and 40% relative humidity or 27°C and 80% relative humidity.**

Additionally, conception rates fall once THI is above 72 (i.e. 25°C and 50% relative humidity). Sunshine can add several degrees to the THI whereas wind can lower it by several points.



Clinical signs of heat stress:

Cows respond to rising body temperature by reducing activities that produce heat (feed intake, milk production and exercise).

Early signs of heat stress include: increased breathing rate, elevated rectal temperature, shade-seeking behaviour, refusal to lie down, thirst and reduced feed intake. As heat stress worsens, cows will crowd the troughs, lie in wet muddy areas, become agitated and breathing will become laboured and open-mouthed. Cows can also salivate excessively. Frothy discharge from the mouth or nose indicates severe heat stress and further increases in the body temperature will result in convulsions, collapse, coma and death. To treat severe heat stroke, hose the entire body with cool water, provide shade and place a fan in front of the cow. Administer cool water via stomach tube and monitor rectal temperature.

Production losses secondary to heat stress:

- Depressed feed intake: dry matter intake reduces by 10-20% if air temperature >26°C.
- Reduced milk production and decreased fat and protein percentages
- Elevated somatic cell counts
- Impaired reproductive performance: reduced conception rates and submission rates; reduced bull fertility; increased early embryo loss; reduced pasture quality in the hotter

months also negatively affects reproductive performance.

- Hot humid conditions favour development of environmental mastitis – cows wallowing in the mud to get cool compounds this.
- Increased incidence of lameness secondary to subacute rumen acidosis (secondary to reduced pasture intake, slug feeding concentrates at milking, reduced cud chewing, increased respiration and excessive salivation).
- Reduced calf viability – lower birth weights (can be as much as 6-8%), reduced colostrum quality and impaired transfer of immunoglobulins; calves born in the heat are weaker and slower to suck.

Practical ways to reduce or prevent heat stress:

- Provide **ample fresh clean and cool drinking water** – ensure the watering system is capable for providing large amounts of water during hot conditions as intake can increase by 50% during periods of heat stress. Have water troughs in every grazing paddock and all shade, loafing or feeding areas.
- Provide **plenty of shade** – consider covering milking yard with an insulated roof
- **Sprinklers and fans can be very effective** – consider installing sprinklers in the milking yard or in feed pads. Studies have shown a >10% improvement in production if both shade and sprinkler systems were provided at milking times. **Sprinklers are most effective when combined with a fan and they must be sufficiently effective to wet the coat through to the skin** (i.e. spray large droplets), otherwise they further impede heat loss if they only mist.

- Install a **shower** in the exit lane from the dairy.
- **Alter milking times** - milk early in the morning or very late in the afternoon during the Summer months
- After morning milking get the cows to pasture rapidly to maximise feed intake as many cows will start seeking shade and therefore stop grazing by 9am (when it is very hot).
- Digestion of roughage produces greater heat gain than digestion of concentrate feedstuffs. **Modify the ration** to increase its energy density and reduce the fibre. Consider reducing the forage and increasing the highly fermentable concentrates (NB: must be carefully balanced to avoid ruminal acidosis) OR supplement with fat e.g. whole cottonseed or tallow
- **Avoid overfeeding protein** (heat is produced when excess nitrogen is excreted)
- **Ensure feed and water is close to the shade.** When feeding conserved forage, feed this under the shade during the day and have pasture (especially highest quality with lowest %NDF) grazed at night. Feed intake can be increased significantly if feed is taken to the cows resting in the shade during the day.
- **Ensure feed is highly palatable/high quality.**
- When temperature >30°C, diet should contain at least 125g salt per cow per day.
- Longer term strategies where heat wave conditions are frequent, could include crossbreeding with Jerseys or Brown Swiss, installing cooling ponds or altering the calving pattern to avoid large numbers of cows calving between September and January when the THI is at its peak.

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