



# Hilton Veterinary Hospital

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## Inside this issue:

November sees us approaching the end of the year already. In the last newsletter, I wrote an article to inform people on law and policy changes regarding annual rabies vaccinations (reduction from every year to every three years). These changes have not been well received by all veterinarians. Please take time to read the article on Page 4 where I explain this in more detail. We have had some big changes happen at Hilton Veterinary Hospital this year, not the least of which was the opening of our **emergency clinic**. Hilton Veterinary Hospital now has a veterinarian on call 24 hours a day every day of the year. We also have a vet in attendance until 9 pm on weekdays Monday to Friday, to see emergencies and attend to our hospitalised patients for longer. This clinic has proven to be very successful and, very warmly received by both the referring veterinarians and the public in need of help for their animals in these unsociable hours. We have seen and saved many cases amongst other things, malicious and accidental poisonings and countless cases of bite wounds. Some of the bite wound cases were highly critical requiring intensive therapy and constant attention throughout the night. Most of the poisoning cases were nursed through but some do still succumb, despite all our efforts. Some of these cases vomit and fit deep into the night requiring multiple doses of anti-epileptics, anti-emetics and toxin antidotes in order for them to recover.

They have tubes in them for drips, iv administration of medication, intranasal administration of oxygen, activated charcoal and feeding. They have to be turned, monitored and their medication titrated throughout the night. Their stomachs are suctioned, their temperatures controlled, the nutritional requirements met. They are cleaned up after they fit, or have vomiting or diarrhoea throughout the night and early morning. Efforts to control these symptoms can also be intensified as needed throughout the night. The rewarding part comes the next day when a family comes in, expecting the worst, having seen the state of their animal the night before, only to find their animal in a calm state, no longer fitting. I often write about malicious and accidental poisonings because they have such an impact on people both financially and emotionally. The best advice I can give is to assume that a pet will eat anything toxic it can reach. Also assume the pet is better at getting to things than you think. Try to train them to only accept only appropriate foods from appropriate people. Keep them indoors at night. Take out an inquisitive animal on a lead first thing in the morning to scout for poison thrown over the perimeter during the night before leaving for work. You will come home to dead or dying animals if poison was left in your yard and the animals find it. Cats are very selective eaters and are usually only poisoned by their owners dosing them inappropriately with inappropriate products.

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**After Hours  
Emergencies:**  
Please phone  
(033) 343 4602

**Contact Details:**  
If your contact details have changed then please inform us.

**This month's  
theme:**  
Road Traffic Accidents and  
the Vaccine Debate

## Editorial Continued

We would like to take this opportunity to wish Umgeni vets all the best in their new premises. We are busy discussing ways in which we can work more closely with Umgeni to the benefit of the community and their patients. We would also like to congratulate Derek on successfully integrating into the management of his own practice in Hayfields. We are hearing good things about Hayfields. Improving veterinary practice in general can only be to the benefit of all of us and our pets.

Other major changes already taking place at Hilton Veterinary Hospital or taking place in the near future include the following:

We have acquired the first dedicated dental x-ray unit in the Midlands. We all know that tooth pathology is 70% below the gum line and x-rays are the only way to see this and any retained roots after extractions. We are on a drive to fight oral pain and halitosis (smelly breath) in your pets. If you have continuing problems after before or after dental procedures perhaps it is time to have some radiographs taken to see what the underlying issues are. Dr Lillian Hirzel is our veterinary dentist and can discuss some very reasonable options for oral care in your animals.

The second change is our acquisition of the first veterinary Class IV K-laser for the non-medical treatment of acute painful inflammatory conditions in South Africa. The laser also has major implications in the treatment of chronic arthritis, acute joint injuries, non-healing bite wounds, trauma and cancer. We will also update you as we find its true place in our practice for optimal benefits to your pets. I am extremely excited about the opportunity to reduce the risk and cost of chronic medication for some of your pets without adding any side effects. The treatments are packaged and very well priced to encourage usage. You book with me for the first treatment and with our nurse's clinic for subsequent treatments.



Thirdly and probably most importantly Dr Richard Burchell is coming back to Hilton Veterinary Hospital from Onderstepoort, where he has been one of their vets for the last few years. He has completed his master's degree and is now one of four medicine specialists in KZN. He will bring exciting new information and expertise to Hilton and some assistance to me.

The fourth major change is, our extensions. You have already seen the landscaping. Once the building is finished the landscaping will provide parking for more than 20 vehicles. The extensions to the buildings will bring forth new handicap friendly ablutions, the first dedicated veterinary ICU in KZN, two of the very few high sterility theatres in KZN for animals, and a much larger front entrance section which will give us more space for our shop and reception waiting area. We will also have a dedicated room with its own entrance for our parlour. We will be fully operational with our primary care day clinic, our nurses clinic, our referral clinic, our current theatre, our hospital and our emergency clinic throughout the whole process. Although our hospital is already extensively equipped, when this is all complete Hilton will have a state of the art Veterinary Hospital.

Thank you to all our clients and referring vets for your support and for the opportunities to be able to grow and give something back in the form of staff, equipment and facilities for your pets.

Thank you to all the staff and clients who contributed to this newsletter.

Regards

Martin de Scally

Dedicated to the health of your pets.

## Nurse's Clinic: Monthly Senior Cat Health Check Part 1: Sr Jan Gould

Even with the monthly home check it is important to be aware of your cat's general routine, habits and physical appearance. If you notice any changes in behavior such as increased or decreased thirst, increased or decreased hunger, changes in litter tray habits, sleeping more or less, not grooming, poor coat condition, wounds which do not heal, coughing, sneezing, etc., then seek immediate veterinary attention.

- **Ears:** Check for signs of bleeding, debris, dirt or wax. Look for signs of ear mites (reddish/brown discharge in the ear, bleeding from the ear, coffee-grounds like appearance in the ear, scratch marks, odor). You may notice a small amount of wax which is normal. Your cat's ears should not have an unpleasant odor. Check the edge of your cat's ears for thickening, scaling, lesions & redness. Look for lumps, bumps or any swellings on the ear.
- **Eyes:** These should be bright & clear with no redness, swelling, weeping or discharge.
- **Nose:** This should be free of discharge. Check for lumps, bumps, swellings & ulcers which don't heal.
- **Mouth, Teeth & gums:** The teeth should be white with no signs of chips or lesions. Gums healthy looking & pink without receding, redness, bleeding or swelling. Check for signs of tartar around the gum line. Check around the mouth, lips & tongue for ulcers, lumps, bumps, swelling & lesions.
- **Chin:** Check for lumps & bumps on the chin. A dirty appearing chin may be a sign your cat has feline acne.
- **Respiration:** Observe your cat's breathing. This should be even & appear to be easy & effortless. Increased respiration & or effort should not be observed. Also check for panting, wheezing, coughing, suffering shortness of breath.
- **Skin & Coat:** This should be healthy looking, fur should be shiny. Gently pull up the skin at the shoulder & release. It should spring back immediately, if it doesn't your cat is dehydrated.
- **Claws:** Check the length; if they are too long (especially in indoor only cats) give them a trim.
- **Body:** Run your hands along the head, body, limbs & tail checking for lumps, bumps & signs of

- **Mobility:** Put your cat down & observe its movements. Does it appear stiff or uncomfortable? Is it avoiding using any limbs?

**Weight:** Keeping a record of your cat's weight is a good idea. Run your hands along the cat's ribs. You should be just able to feel the ribs. If they can be easily felt, your cat may be underweight, if you can't feel them at all, he may be overweight

### **Effects of ageing:**

As with people, old age brings a number of changes to how the body works.

- As old cats are often less active, their muscle tone tends to reduce which may further reduce their ability to run, jump and climb. Lack of exercise contributes to the stiffening of joints.
- Frequently older cats suffer from a poor appetite as the senses of taste and smell often deteriorate with age. Teeth problems are common and can discourage eating.
- Reduced vision and hearing may mean that your cat is easily startled and may take longer to adapt to changes in its home environment.
- Bowel function may deteriorate with age, causing problems such as reduced ability to absorb food nutrients. This can lead to weight loss. Some elderly cats suffer from constipation.

Elderly cats often have an increased water requirement due to reduced kidney function, but reduced mobility and reduced appetite may result in reduced water intake, putting them at risk of dehydration. This is particularly dangerous in cats with kidney problems.

- With increasing age the immune system can become less efficient, leading to increased susceptibility to infection.

- Older cats tend to sleep less heavily but more frequently.

Old cats often have poor coats which may make them less resistant to the cold and wet.



## The Controversial Vaccination Debate: Dr Martin de Scally

Law and policy changes regarding annual rabies vaccinations have taken place where there has been a reduction from every year to every three years. These changes have not been well received by all veterinarians for fear of rabies re-emerging. Whilst I fully respect the views of my colleagues, I would encourage people to make up their own minds by going to the World Small Animal Veterinary Association vaccines site (just type in "WSAVA vaccines" into Google you will get the articles, or copy and paste this link for one of the editorials :

[http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/2011\\_VetRecord\\_EditorialVaccination.pdf](http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/2011_VetRecord_EditorialVaccination.pdf))

The editorials are most helpful for discussions on the subject. **Remember the merits of vaccinating each animal, should be assessed at an annual check up by a qualified veterinarian**, for this reason I am particularly concerned about blanket vaccinations being given without a proper veterinarian examination. Whilst this process is necessary in some instances to reduce costs, it is not for responsible pet owners with the means to do better for their pets as serious complications are possible. At this stage I am not sure who takes responsibility for complications in these cases. The facts, as my previous article on the subject stated are, some vaccines are registered for a minimum of three years and you must do them, 99% of dogs that received at least one rabies vaccination after 16 weeks of age remain immune for life, vaccination is associated with around 30 complications in every 10000 vaccinations (Moore and

others 2005, 2007). (These figures may be underestimated by a lack of reports on vaccine reactions). This means that a dog receiving annual vaccinations has about a 1 in 20 chance of a reaction if they live to 14 years old, it also means that the same animal has about a 1 in 40 chance of a reaction if vaccinated every 3 years including the initial boosters. This means the animal vaccinated according to the WSAVA guidelines has 2.0 X less chance of a reaction without any reduction in efficacy. The reactions include fever, malaise, autoimmune disease, allergic reactions and cancer induction



The law in South Africa now states that in KZN only 3 yearly vaccinations against rabies is required and not annually anymore. Please feel free to request the letter from the department of agriculture from me on [martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za](mailto:martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za). Those that fear that the drug companies cannot meet their registration claims of three years and are willing to ignore the warnings that go with over vaccination are welcome to vaccinate every year. I think you must have an open mind and as suggested look at each case on its own merits.





## Road Traffic Accidents by Dr Lara Brown

It's every pet owners' worst nightmare: having your beloved pet hit by a car, or even worse, hitting your pet with your own car. While it is something one always hopes and strives to avoid, it is best to be prepared should the worst happen.

### **My dog just got hit, now what?**

The first thing to remember is that an animal that is in a lot of pain, scared and confused can be a danger to itself and others. A natural instinct can be to flee from what it perceives as the immediate danger- close your garden gate or attempt to catch your animal before it runs back into the road. That being said, your dog can easily bite you, purely out of fear and pain, so be sure to protect yourself. Protect your hands and muzzle your dog if you can. If you do get bitten, be sure to contact your GP about any vaccinations, such as tetanus, you should get and advice on cleaning the wound. Once your dog is safe, quickly assess him for anything obvious. If there is excessive bleeding, apply pressure to the wound as best you can. Carry your pet gently to your car. Your next step is to bring him to us for assessment and treatment as soon as you can. Try to phone in advance so that we can get everything ready.

Our protocol: **While we have a standard protocol in place, each animal is assessed as an individual.** Our standard protocol for animals hit by cars is to do a basic clinical examination first and take a history from you. Remember to let us know if your pet is on any medication.. A blood smear (a simple test to screen for blood parasites and signs of infection) will usually be performed too. Taking x-rays is an important part of our protocol. We may need to x-ray the chest, abdomen, pelvis and apparently injured limbs (approximately 10 x-rays). It may sound excessive, but many problems caused by the sudden traumatic impact are difficult to detect or determine the extent of without taking x-rays. If the accident was not seen, it is also difficult to know the likelihood of extensive injuries. There is great value in this approach. For example, lung contusions (lung bruising) are commonly seen and the animal then needs to be put on oxygen and medication to treat the condition. We may suspect lung bruising on examination of your pet with a stethoscope, but we cannot confirm it until we do the x-ray. Similarly, we can usually tell if there is an obvious fracture in a bone of the leg. But how many fractures there are; the nature of the fracture ( a clean

break or a shattered bone) and position of the fracture cannot be determined without an x-ray. Another example is the case of diaphragmatic hernias. Simply put, the impact sustained can cause the diaphragm to rupture which essentially leads to the abdominal organs bursting into the chest. This is obviously a serious condition which requires urgent stabilisation and subsequent treatment. The bottom-line is, if we know the full extent of your pets' injuries, we can do our absolute best to treat your pet and get them home to you as soon as possible. Often due to the pain the animal is in, sedation can be required. While this is a standard protocol, we assess each animal as an individual and may deem it necessary to stabilise your pet before sedation, for example placing them on a drip. Based on what we find, we will then advise you on an appropriate course of treatment, as well as common complications. Costs are always something to think of and we will give you a broad estimate on the best course of treatment. Be upfront with us about what is affordable for you (and don't forget that we offer a payment plan system) and we will work with you. When you sign the 'Consent to Treat' form, the estimate will be on there. We do not thumb-suck these figures, nor will we try to max out the estimate just because you have given permission. We just need to know what is available for us to use for treatment. Please consider medical aid for your pets. It is a comfort to have it, should the worst happen. I see far too many people who start asking about medical aid after their pet has sustained injuries.

Preventative steps are obviously the best things you can implement before an accident happens. Puppies that are not used to cars and older dogs that cannot move quickly are often victims of car accidents, frequently in their own driveway. Hyperactive dogs, who like chasing cars, are also at more risk. Preventing access to the driveway and street is essential. Dogs can be trained to stay on the property. If this is not possible, additional fencing or confining the dog while cars are moving can be a solution. If your dog is old and frail, or blind, or very young and exuberant, extra caution must be taken. Just as much caution as you would use if you had a toddler in your home.

Of course the Hilton Vet Team only wants to see your dog for his/her annual health check or vaccinations. But this hopefully gives you an idea of what to expect should the worst happen, and you can rely on us to give your pet the best care possible.

## Update on Scooby By Gaby Frey

On the 2nd September Scooby and Gaby flew from Margate to Johannesburg and then on to Frankfurt. Scooby was allowed to fly in the cabin with Gaby in her little pet bag. She was so well behaved for the 10 hour trip. They spent 2 days in Frankfurt with friends and on 5th of September the rest of the SA team arrived and they all travelled to Luxembourg the venue for the world dog agility champs.

On Sunday 7th the SA team had pre entered a competition which was 1 hours drive from their hotel. It was a good way to acclimatize. The competition was stiff and the courses difficult and Gaby was very happy as Scooby and her managed to achieve a 3rd place position in the non contact competition.

The following 3 days were spent training with a little sight seeing. Luxembourg has the most beautiful forest walks and cycle tracks. Scooby just loved running in the forests with her new friends.. There was such excitement all the new smells.

On the Friday the world champs started, The atmosphere was electric. The championship ran like clockwork. There were 466 competitors from all over the world to get through in one day. The categories were large medium and small breeds. Scooby fell in to the small breed category There were 30 countries represented from as far a field as Columbia Japan Russia Finland and USA.



Gaby and Scooby ran 4 courses over the weekend. 2 for the team and 2 as individual. The courses were much tougher than they have in SA competitions and points of seconds count. Many competitors overseas do the sport full time and always have very strong competition to compete against which means that their standard is very high. There are also a lot of youngsters in their twenties against whom they have to compete.

Gaby and Scooby ended up 28th in the whole world which is amazing. because they do not have a coach. Gaby is so proud of Scooby to have achieved that at 10 years of age and she herself was the oldest handler in the SA team.

On their return 2 days later the KZN championships were held at the flower show in Pietermaritzburg and Scooby again ran like a little star. She had no jet lag. Gaby and Scooby won all 3 gold medals which no small dog has ever achieved in KZN.

Soon after that at the Hibiscus Kennel club championship Gaby and Scooby won 7 out of 9 competitions. What an amazing achievement. There is no stopping her. She just loves it and has so much fun which is why Gaby also loves the sport so much and it keeps her fit.

(Scooby was badly mauled by Pit Bull Terriers in 2012 and Gaby together with Hilton Vet Hospital managed to save her life. Scooby you are very blessed to have Gaby as your Mom. )



## Cat Stress



### 10 ways to relieve cat stress

Stress may play a major role in Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC). Here's how you can help.

1. Create high places and private spaces
2. Create a refuge where your cat can feel safe
3. Make sure each litter box is clean and big enough – at least 1.5x your cat's body length
4. Place litter boxes far from food bowls and in quiet places
5. Praise good behaviour – don't punish your cat for accidents
6. Give your cat something to scratch, which releases pheromones and makes her feel happy
7. Keep her in shape – overweight cats can't move or jump
8. Create a play area with toys and other items to keep her active
9. Indoor cats can get bored, so give yours a view of the world outside
10. If you have more than one cat, make sure you have enough food, water, litter boxes and safe places for everyone!



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[www.hillspromo.co.za/stressometer](http://www.hillspromo.co.za/stressometer)"



## Staff Profile:

### Ferris Chitsora

Welcome to Ferris who has recently joined Hilton Vet Hospital. We are very grateful for all the effort and enthusiasm he puts in to all he does. Ferris is in a relationship with Bridget.

Ferris helps to keep our hospital clean and also assists in caring for your beloved pets.

Ferris enjoys working with dogs and puppies and says there is still a lot more that he would like to learn.

In his spare time Ferris enjoys running and playing soccer.



## To make you smile:

