

8-12 Fitzilian Avenue  
Harold Wood  
Romford  
Essex  
RM3 0QS  
Tel: 01708 384444  
Fax: 01708 344318  
E-mail: News@ExoticVets.net  
www.Vets.gb.com



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by appointment  
Mon-Fri: 9am-11am  
12pm-2pm  
4pm-7pm

Sat: 11am-1pm  
3pm-5pm

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2009

### WELCOME ! INSIDE THIS ISSUE.....

**STAFF NEWS...**Introducing Toni Scarsbrook Nursing Assistant

**ATTENTION ALL TORTOISE OWNERS...** Is your tortoise safe from your other pets?

**WHAT'S NEW?...**Waiting room display, staff and client education

**HOW TO TRANSPORT YOUR PET TO THE VET...**Jamie Biggs

**KIDS CORNER...**A quiz from Lauren Austin

**EXOTIC SPOT...** the Sulcata Tortoise

**THE CREDIT CRUNCH BITES!...**how to cope with increasing Vet bills

### ATTENTION ALL TORTOISE OWNERS

Now that the weather is warming up your tortoise should be awake and eating well. It is important that, weather permitting, you should allow your tortoise access to an outside pen to graze on grass and weeds and to bask in natural sunlight. However, **if you also own a dog** please be aware that your tortoise may be at risk. We have seen several tortoises in the past 2 years with horrific injuries caused by bites from pet dogs. Tortoises under 5 years old are particularly at risk as the shell is not fully hardened and the dog's teeth can penetrate into the body cavity. To avoid this mis-



hap always make sure that the tortoise pen has a secure lid to prevent access by the dog.

Sometimes of course the tortoise is bigger than the dog!

### STAFF NEWS

This year so far has been a busy one for the Vets at Lawton and Stoakes. All three of the Vets have been to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Courses either abroad or in the UK. These courses are essential for us to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and to enable us to offer the very latest in new medical and surgical techniques to our patients.

We have another new face to introduce. Toni Scarbrook joins the team of nursing assistants and hopes to start the NVQ Veterinary Nursing Award next year. Toni has the Diploma in Animal Care from Writtle College and has a keen interest in raptors (birds of Prey) and dogs. She keeps a Whites Tree Frog called Freddie and a male Ferrutail hawk and a female Redtail Hawk.



Some of the female staff members and their relatives and friends will be "running" in this year's Race for Life (in aid of Cancer Research UK) at Hylands Park on June 21<sup>st</sup>. Jamie has kindly offered to be our mascot and will cheer us on from the sidelines! If you would like to sponsor the staff in this event please ask at reception to sign the form. We hope to raise over £500 for this cause to beat our 2007 total.

## WHATS NEW?

The new digital display will be up and running in May. This display in the waiting room will give our clients a view into the workings of our surgery by showing a series of photographs. Clients will be able to “meet the team” and put names to faces and find out the roles of the various members of the staff team who look after your pets. There will be a “virtual

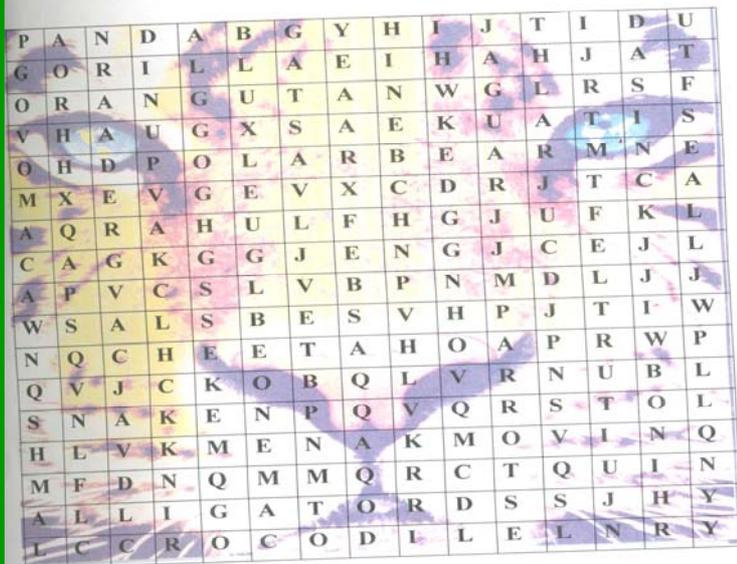


tour” of the surgery enabling clients to see what goes on behind the consulting room doors. We will be able to show clients all the equipment we have available to offer the best service to our patients. It is hoped that this digital display will also contain useful facts to inform and entertain you while you wait to see the Veterinary Surgeon and this will be updated periodically.

Other new equipment recently purchased to enhance the service to our clients is a Fundus camera. This allows digital images of the back of the eye (the retina) to be taken and recorded in the computer medical records for your pet. Not only does this provide a record of your pet’s eye examination you will be able to see the pictures for yourself.

For the nurses and client education we now have a Digital Anatomical Atlas which contains pictures and animations of the various internal and external organs in health and disease. It is hoped that we will soon be able to produce many client information leaflets for you to take home to help you understand your pet’s condition and the treatment

## Endangered Animal Wordsearch



Panda, Elephant, Orang-utan, Turtle,  
Parrot, Macaw, Leopard, Cheetah, Seal,  
Polar Bear, Crocodile, Alligator, Jaguar,  
Eagle, Rhino, Gorilla, Snake.

## KIDS CORNER

This word-search is by Lauren Austin our administrator’s daughter. It was part of a project on endangered animals and we think its fantastic! Can you find all the animals listed?

If you would like to have a picture or poem or story published why not send it in. We give a prize to any we publish.

## HOW TO TRANSPORT YOUR PET TO THE VET by Jamie Biggs

Please keep dogs on a lead at all times. If your dog is not good with strangers or other dogs, muzzles are available so please do not feel embarrassed to ask for one if you think it necessary. We request that any particularly noisy dogs wait outside so as not to upset other patients, as there may be more nervous animals such as birds in the waiting room.



Cats should be brought to the surgery in a secure basket, preferably one which opens from the top, as that proves easier access for a particularly stubborn patient! Many cats travel better if covered, therefore a towel or blanket can be used if the basket is not completely enclosed.

We ask that birds are brought in a cage rather than a box, so that the Vet can assess them at rest before handling. Small birds can be brought in their regular cage, but please don't clean out the bottom, as faeces can prove very useful in helping to diagnose certain illnesses. Larger birds can be brought in a smaller transport cage. Whatever the size of the bird, they are often happier when the cage is covered, as the chances of them being frightened by something on their journey will be decreased.



Snakes can be transported in a pillow case or duvet for larger species, and should then be placed in a box. Some form of heat should also be provided for the journey. The easiest way of providing extra heat is to use a hot water bottle, however the snake must never be able to come into direct contact with it so as to avoid burns, therefore the bottle should be placed outside of the pillow case/duvet, and ideally wrapped in a towel.

Lizards should be transported in a secure box appropriate for their size. Additional heat such as a hot water bottle should also be provided, but again should be wrapped in a towel to prevent burns caused by direct contact.



Tortoises can be brought in any kind of rigid box, which can contain material such as hay or shredded paper for insulation. A hot water bottle can be placed under this material, but should also be covered with a towel to stop the tortoise becoming overheated.

Fish should be placed in a polythene bag filled with water from their own pond/tank, as this ensures that the water temperature and quality remain the same so as to keep stress to a minimum. The bag should then be tied at the top, making sure to trap air inside whilst doing so. The bag can then be placed into a rigid container such as a plastic or polystyrene box to make it easier to carry.



There is a quiet area of the waiting room for particularly nervous patients, located around the corner from the main reception outside consulting room 3. We ask that all patients are restrained at all times to ensure the health and safety of other clients and their animals.

## EXOTIC SPOT

### The Sulcata Tortoise *Geochelone sulcata*

These tortoises are the second largest tortoise species and can reach a size of 60cm (24in) and weigh up to 50kg (110lb)! There are no restrictions on its importation for the pet



trade unlike the Mediterranean tortoises. They originate from the Southern Sahara desert, an area of harsh scrubland. They have a rounded carapace and the front of the plastron (the gular scute) has a forked projection

which is used for fighting in males. The males can be very aggressive. The front legs have thick scales and are very powerful



as these tortoises burrow in their native land to escape extremes of temperature found in their natural habitat. The hind legs have 2 spurs on the thighs which gives them their American name of African Spurred Tortoise (not to be confused with the Mediterranean Spur Thigh tortoise).

The Sulcata tortoise does not hibernate and needs to be kept at a temperature above 21°C with a basking area of over 30°C all year round. They need a large area in which to graze with strong perimeter fencing as these animals are very strong. They will also require heated indoor housing with an Ultraviolet light source especially during the winter months which makes them very expensive to keep and this should be borne in mind before purchasing a Sulcata.



They are entirely herbivorous and require a high fibre, low protein diet. This can be provided by feeding garden weeds, grass, chopped hay and dark green leafy vegetables. A supplement of Calcium (Nutrobal, Vetark) is essential as they grow so massive, this should be applied to every feed. It is important not to over feed the young growing Sulcata or they will develop shell abnormalities. A water dish into which they can climb should be provided with clean water daily. Although these animals come from an arid climate they can burrow to conserve moisture which they are unable to do in captivity and so they will often bathe in the water during hot weather in captivity.

#### THE CREDIT CRUNCH BITES!

As the economic crisis continues we appreciate that for many people Veterinary fees can be an unexpected worry. Unfortunately recent European Guidelines require Vets to dispose of injectable medicines in multidose bottles if they have been open more than 28 days. These perfectly good, wasted medicines have to be disposed of as "Special Waste" for which we are charged. This will inevitably mean an increase in costs of injectable drugs to the client, which is unfortunately beyond our control.

It is important that if you are having financial difficulties that you speak to the Veterinary Surgeon in confidence at the beginning of treatment so that we can discuss the various treatment options with you. To help our clients with Veterinary Fees we accept all major credit cards and offer an interest free monthly payment plan (a maximum of 4 instalments) subject to conditions. We also recommend Pet Insurance and are happy to discuss this with you.

Remember we are concerned for the welfare of your pet and it is important that you continue with preventative health care such as yearly vaccines to avoid potentially fatal disease.