



## “Slugs and snails and puppy dog tails”!

Soaring slug and snail populations pose threat to dogs

Soggy weather conditions have again provided an ideal environment for a huge increase in the UK's populations of slugs and snails, and this could pose a serious risk to dogs that accidentally or habitually eat these slippery pests.

Veterinary surgeon Kate Myers-Smith, warns owners to be on the look out for signs that their dog has, or may be prone to picking up a lungworm infection.

Lungworm infection in dogs is spreading across the UK and leads to a disease called Angiostrongylosis. It has a wide range of symptoms which can make it difficult to diagnose. However, with the increasing appearance of the parasite causing this disease, vets are on the look out for the condition before it progresses to a stage where it becomes fatal.

The lungworm parasite spends part of its lifecycle in slugs, snails or even frogs. The danger to dogs arises when small slugs or snails are either purposefully or accidentally eaten while rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass, or taken up when drinking from puddles or an outdoor water bowl.

"The symptoms of the condition are many and varied," explains Kate. "You might notice coughing, reluctance to exercise, depression, weight loss, fits, vomiting, diarrhoea, weakness and paralysis, or persistent bleeding from minor cuts. However, a small proportion of dogs are hidden carriers, which means they don't show any symptoms."

Owners who notice any of these symptoms or whose dogs might eat slugs or snails should contact the surgery for an immediate consultation. The sooner the disease is spotted, the easier it is to treat and the more likely the dog will go on to make a full recovery.

The disease is not treated by using conventional worming tablets every 3 months, or even every month. However, treatment is relatively simple using a prescription-only spot-on product. "This treatment also controls other worms, fleas and mites, which means you can address lungworm and a number of common parasites in one application," concludes Kate.

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## Feeding your Rabbit

The best diet for a rabbit is grass and a good quality hay. A small amount of commercial diet (high fibre)- less than half a mug full a day can be fed. When feeding a commercial diet care should be taken that the rabbit doesn't become a selective feeder (only eating the colour parts which are low in calcium and leaving the pellet and biscuit part). If this is the case a diet such as Supa Rabbit Excel or Supreme Selective (for example) is advised. Wild plants should be given if available eg. Bramble and dandelion. Tiny amounts of fresh root vegetables and their leaves can also be provided (greens, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower etc) as treat items. Carrots or other root vegetables could be suspended to the roof of the cage to act as edible toys, which will reduce boredom and increase time eating.

Fresh water should always be available. It should be given in a water bottle or bowl and changed daily. If using a water bottle the ball bearing should be checked daily to ensure the rabbit is able to access water from the bottle. Sudden changes in diet, frosted or mouldy food and lawnmower clippings should be avoided.

The following problems can arise if your rabbit is not fed a good diet:-

- Diarrhoea—possibly leading to fly strike
- Slower gut mobility
- Dental problems
- Anorexia
- Osteoporosis
- Obesity
- Boredom problems leading to behavioural changes and aggression



## Vaccinations for Kittens and Cats

The three feline infectious diseases that you can vaccinate against are:-

### **Cat 'flu**

This is a highly contagious disease of the cat. It is spread by inhalation of the virus spread by infected cats (sneezing)

Clinical signs:

- ♣ Sneezing
- ♣ Conjunctivitis
- ♣ Eye and nasal discharge
- ♣ Eye and nasal ulceration
- ♣ Anorexia
- ♣ High temperature

### **Feline infectious enteritis**

This is a highly contagious disease and is spread via saliva, vomit, faeces and urine of infected cats.

Clinical signs:

- ♣ Depression
- ♣ Anorexia
- ♣ Persistent vomiting
- ♣ Painful (distended abdomen)
- ♣ Diarrhoea (often liquid)
- ♣ Even death

### **Felv (Feline Leukaemia Virus)**

Infection can occur following DIRECT contact with an infected cat. It is spread via saliva, mucus, urine, faeces and milk. Saliva contains high levels of the virus, so cat bites are a common way for transmitting the virus. Infection can also be transmitted from the queen to her kittens whilst pregnant or via the milk.

Clinical signs:

Vary greatly—but once the cat has been infected with Felv, there is no cure. We can only support their symptoms, which will generally lead to premature death.

Kittens can be vaccinated from 9 weeks of age. The course consists of two separate injections given 3 weeks apart (9 and 12 weeks) with a booster given yearly thereafter.

We strongly recommend that any cat that will be going outside or in a multicat household is vaccinated against leukaemia.