Welcome Baby Fraser!

On the 12th of January, healthy baby boy Fraser joined Dr Lesa’s family. He is already a regular visitor to Hall Vet Surgery.

Autumn News

Happy Easter!

Easter is on its way and we are all looking forward to indulging in a little chocolate….but beware the canine chocolate thief! Chocolate can be dangerous to our pets. In this issue meet Jaffa the chocoholic who overdosed on Easter eggs last year. Mr Ronald has some more words of wisdom for the weight watching canine in your family and Geraldine gives you some tips on training your dog to beg on page 2. We celebrate the lives of two wonderful pets and the precious human/dog bond, also.

Preparing for winter

With the onset of autumn, and winter just around the corner, cooler mornings are challenging our old pets’ joints. If your dog is slow to get going in the morning or avoids climbing stairs or into the car, the hips may be a problem. Cats more commonly have trouble with their elbows and shoulders. Reluctance to jump down as well as up is a marker of arthritis in cats. Discuss natural dietary additives for arthritis such as glucosamine and chondroitin with our vet nurses. A warm dog coat from Hall Vet Surgery, a soft bed and easy steps or ramps may help alleviate some of the pain and stiffness. Your vet may also recommend arthritis injections or pain relief.

Check out our website at hallvet.com.au, where you can find the online version of the newsletter, fun stuff and lots of information about providing the best possible care for your pet.
Dear Mr Ronald,

I am finding it so hard to cut down on the good things of life... My friend Molly the Malamute suggested a complete change of diet. I don't know how I would cope without my morning cheese on toast but perhaps she's right. Is a complete dietary change a good idea?

Beth the Bulldog from Belconnen

Dear Beth,

I found that a complete dietary change was very effective! I lost 5 kg on a special weight loss diet prescribed by my vet at Hall Veterinary Surgery.

Before starting a diet see your vet for a checkup to make sure you have no health problems. Once your vet and nurse have decided on your optimum weight they will recommend the amount and type of food that is best for you. Don't be tempted to stray from their instructions!

At Hall Veterinary Surgery we use Royal Canin Obesity diet. It comes as biscuits and in cans and is a complete and balanced diet. Each day your owner will give you a measured amount with a fixed calorie level. It's a good idea to have a weigh-in with your nurse every time your owner comes in to buy the food. This ensures that you lose weight steadily and safely.

The high fibre content of Royal Canin Obesity diet makes you feel full and helps you go without snacks. Rawhide or porky chews have few calories and help keep your mind off your stomach for a while too. Raw vegetables are also chewy, low in calories and make you feel full. If you chew raw bones for your teeth, then replace fattening ones like marrow bones or chicken wings with leaner ones like kangaroo tails.

If your weight loss is too slow then your nurse may suggest that you reduce the total amount of food you eat in a day by 30%. Our metabolisms are all different and sometimes we need less than originally calculated. Be sure that you are not having any fattening treats or raiding the bin for extras and sabotaging everyone's hard work, though.

Special weight loss diets like Royal Canin Obesity are not meant to be consumed over the long term. Once you reach your target weight you should go onto the maintenance diet recommended by your vet and nurse.

Good luck!

Mr Ronald

(Weight Loss Consultant Extraordinaire)

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Gel's Training Tips

**BEG**

**Step 1:**
With your dog sitting in front of you hold a food treat just above his head. If he moves up towards the treat say 'yes' and give a treat.

**Step 2:**
This time he must reach up a little higher to gain the treat. Small steps like this make it easy for your dog to follow your lead.

**Step 3:**
Continue to do the same but delay the "yes" for a second or two. This will extend the time your dog is in the Beg position. Reward him when he assumes a good Beg position - better than the ones rewarded in Steps 1 & 2.

**Step 4:**
Your dog should be achieving a good Beg position and holding it for a few seconds. Now it is time to add your verbal cue word. I use beg but you can use whatever word you choose.

Say your cue word a fraction of a second before presenting the treat to your dog. With repetition this will build an association in your dog's mind between Beg and getting into the beg position.

**Step 5:**
Leave food lures behind. Rely solely on the verbal cue word beg to signal the beg position. To strengthen or proof the behaviour try it in different locations with a variety of distractions. Many dogs try to stand up on their back legs instead of rocking back on their haunches when learning the Beg trick. If this happens lower the food lure and start him from a sitting rather than standing position.

If your dog is struggling to balance in the beg position or continually backs away, you could try your training sessions against a wall or in a corner.

If your dog seems confused or doesn't seem to be progressing through the steps quickly enough, keep it simple and fun. Try short, sharp training sessions and only add one new requirement per training session. Go back a step if your dog doesn't seem to be getting it. Several short 3 minute training sessions over a two week period will achieve the same end result.

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Phoenix Hawkins

Passed away 10/2/09.
A sweet man, brave to the end, who enjoyed long walks, playing with his brother Apollo, and chewing bones. His loving owners and friends at Hall Vet Surgery miss him very much.

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Star Pet

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Jaffa’s Chocolate Misadventures

Jaffa, the miniature chocolate poodle, lives up to his name – he loves chocolate. Last Easter he found the Lindt 90% dark chocolate (with orange!) stash in the dining room and was relishing the third angel when his owner Sally discovered him.

Sally had heard that even a small amount of chocolate can spell disaster for small dogs. She rushed him to Hall Vet Surgery. A teaspoon of washing soda crystals brought most of the chocolate up, but there was still enough in his system for us to keep him in hospital for the day.

Chocolate is a mixture of cocoa beans and cocoa butter. It contains theobromine and caffeine, which are both classified as methylxanthines. Dogs are more sensitive to the effects of methylxanthines than humans.

The amount of methylxanthines present in chocolate varies with the type. The general rule is the bitterer the chocolate, the more toxic. Unsweetened baking chocolate contains almost seven times more theobromine as milk chocolate while white chocolate contains negligible amounts of methylxanthines. The dark chocolate that Jaffa consumed contains more than twice as many methylxanthines as milk chocolate.

Jaffa’s heart rate was high and he was very active. Chocolate can make the heart beat so rapidly that it starts missing beats. Dogs poisoned by chocolate may also drink a lot of water, become bloated, vomit, suffer diarrhoea, tremble, become blue in the mouth or go into a coma.

Jaffa was back to normal that night and keen to go home. We discharged him but asked Sally to keep a close eye on him for vomiting or a painful belly. Some dogs recover from chocolate poisoning and later get an inflamed pancreas because of the fat in the chocolate.

In Memory of a Grand Old Lady

I chose you when I was only ten weeks old and little did I know that I was going to be a very special part of your lives for a very long time. I introduced you to my new vet on the very first day and a special bond was formed, and we were special friends until the very last day. I took you both to training and you surely learnt a lot. This helped me through my whole life to do and be the best I could.

We had great time together you and I, for we played and travelled near and far and made many friends along the way. We had the best of fun for we all loved each other unconditionally.

As I grew old and frail you cared and nurtured me, your love growing even stronger as I slowly faded. You both stayed with me until the very end as I will now stay with you and watch over you until we are together again.

Ms Millie The Wonder Pooch
Border Collie
21 May 1992 – 2 February 2009
Our resident computer whiz Andrew has created an interactive map of off-leash exercise areas in North Canberra. You can exercise your dog off-leash in the blue areas on the map. The interactive version may be found on our website at www.hallvet.com.au/dogareas. Click on your suburb to see close ups, and notes about regulations in each area.

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www.hallvet.com.au

Opening hours for consults:
9am-6pm
Monday to Friday
8.30am-2.30pm
Saturdays

My tail hurts.

What!?!