



Ark Vet Centre

SMALL ANIMAL NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2025



FIREWORKS

As the darker nights draw in, it means that Firework season is fast approaching. For some pets this can be a stressful time but there are things you can do to try to help:

- ◆ Make sure all pets are inside well before darkness, lock the cat flaps, take dogs for a good long walk during daylight hours to hopefully tire them out.
- ◆ Making a den inside for your dog can be a great idea to give them a 'safe space' that they can hide.
- ◆ For very stressed pets, come and talk to us about how we can help—we can prescribe calming supplements over the counter or sedative drugs for very stressed animals, but they would require an examination for this.



STAFFING UPDATES

Jen Harris

Jen graduated from Glasgow University in 2004 having seen practice at Ark as a local dairy farmers daughter. After two years in mixed practice in South Wales, Jen concentrated on companion animal work at the PDSA in Cardiff and has slowly made her way back up the country to settle with her husband, children and menagerie of animals back 'home' in Dumfries and Galloway. Jen loves wild swimming when she finds a quiet moment in life.

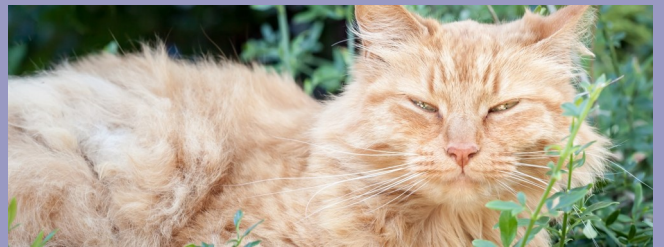


Rhiannon Clokey

Rhiannon, originally from Eaglesham, joined our team after graduating from the Dick Vet in Edinburgh in July 2025. Away from work, you'll often find her on the netball court, in the milking parlour or walking with her little dog Milo.



Senior Cats and the Importance of Blood



Pressure Checks

As cats age, their needs change—and so should their veterinary care. By the time a cat reaches 7–8 years old, they are considered senior, and regular health checks become even more important. One often-overlooked part of senior cat wellness is blood pressure monitoring.



Why Blood Pressure Matters

High blood pressure (hypertension) is surprisingly common in older cats, especially those with kidney disease or hyperthyroidism. Left untreated, it can cause serious complications, including sudden blindness, seizures, strokes, or damage to the heart and kidneys. Because cats are so good at hiding illness, many owners don't realize anything is wrong until the damage is advanced.

A Simple, Non-Invasive Test

The good news is that checking a cat's blood pressure is simple, quick, and completely non-invasive. Much like in people, a small cuff is placed on the leg or tail to measure pressure levels. Many cats tolerate it well, especially in a calm, quiet environment.

Early Detection Saves Sight and Health

Regular blood pressure checks allow us to catch problems early, before symptoms appear. If hypertension is detected, medication can effectively lower blood pressure and prevent long-term damage. Cats treated early often go on to enjoy many more healthy, happy years.

Wellness Visits for Seniors

We are now pleased to be offering Nurse led Blood Pressure

Clinics at both our Lockerbie and St Marys branches which will allow us a proactive approach to help catch changes early, manage chronic conditions, and maintain the best possible quality of life.

If your cat is entering their golden years, talk to us about scheduling a



AUTUMN HAZARDS

As the trees turn to glorious golds and winter starts to creep in see our tips below for keeping your animal safe

HALLOWEEN CHOCOLATE

With this spooky nights just around the corner please make sure that dogs don't have access to the sweet treats as well.

DAWN AND DUSK WALKS

As the days grow shorter please make sure your animals can be seen, High vis jackets and collars are now readily available.

BEWARE OF SLEEPY WASPS

Our Animals might like to enjoy a tasty snack as fruit begins to fall but wasps may be lurking inside, so watch out for stings!

CONKERS AND ACORNS

Although fun to collect and play games also contain aesculin/tannic acid Toxic to dogs.

MUSHROOMS AND TOADSTOOLS

As these pop up in the undergrowth it can be difficult to tell the good from the bad and some are highly toxic.

HARVEST MITES

Itchy feet with little orange dots between the toes can be very irritating to our animals—please seek our advice for treatment if seen.

HEDGEHOG HIBERNATION

Hedgehogs are one of the UK's most familiar garden visitors, and each winter they go through an incredible survival strategy – hibernation. This usually takes place between late October and March, although the exact timing depends on weather and food supply.



During hibernation, a hedgehog's body slows down dramatically to save energy. Their heart rate can drop from nearly 200 beats per minute

to fewer than 20, and their body temperature falls close to the surrounding air. To manage this, they build well-insulated nests (hibernacula) out of leaves, grass, and other natural materials.

Not every hedgehog is ready for hibernation. Those weighing less than 450–500 grams by late autumn may not have enough fat reserves to survive the winter. If you find a small or underweight hedgehog during the colder months, it's best to contact us for advice regarding what to do.

You can help hedgehogs prepare for hibernation by providing food such as meaty cat or dog food, specialist hedgehog food, and fresh water. Avoid bread and milk, which can cause illness. Leaving areas of your garden wild, with piles of leaves or logs, also gives hedgehogs safe nesting spots.



With a little support, these much-loved creatures can continue to thrive through winter and beyond.