



Polly the alpaca  
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# PAWS, CLAWS & ALL FOURS



February 2022

## Welcome

*Peter Heslip (Veterinarian - Balclutha)*

With Omicron looming Clutha Vets are once again working in our separate “bubbles” to ensure we can keep operating when it reaches us. We are committed to providing the best service we can to our clients and the best treatment for our patients, while protecting the public and our staff. The rules we are required to work under are on our Facebook page and the Clutha Vets website and will be updated as circumstances change.

## Parvovirus

*Catherine Copland, Veterinarian, Balclutha*

Over the New Year period we had a sudden influx of pups with severe vomiting and diarrhoea due to Parvovirus infection. In total there were 10 pups from three unconnected households, and to date we are continuing to see isolated cases. Outbreaks have also been reported in Auckland and Christchurch.

This often fatal and highly contagious disease is difficult and expensive to treat, but easy to prevent with vaccination. Parvovirus is less common than it used to be, however with fewer cases there is less awareness, so vaccination rates slip causing a resurgence in numbers.

If your pup is unvaccinated, or overdue for a booster, you should do this as soon as possible. For adult dogs vaccination every three years is very effective. Check your vaccine booklet or call us to check if your dog or pup’s vaccinations are current.

## Microchipping kittens and cats

*Sharron West, Vet Nurse/Receptionist*

This ‘kitten season’ we have decided to microchip each *rehomed* kitten/ cat as part of our rehoming policy.

The cost of microchipping is already discounted as ‘part of another procedure’ for any dog or cat—for example at the time of a vaccination or de-sexing, and we will discount this even further for any kitten or cat that is rehomed from Clutha Vets.

The cost of rehoming a kitten with pre-paying microchipping is only \$40. The microchipping will be done at the time of one of its two vaccinations or at the time of de-sexing. If an adult cat or older kitten is rehomed it will be microchipped before it leaves the clinic.

We made this decision as we deal with a lot of stray kittens and cats that are not microchipped. When a kitten or cat is brought in as a stray we always scan it for a microchip, if it is microchipped it makes our job a lot easier to reunite it with its owner.



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# Canine Neutering

*Martha O'Connor (Veterinarian, Milton)*

Neutering is a surgical procedure where the reproductive organs are removed. For male dogs (castration) their testicles are removed; for female dogs (spey) their ovaries and uterus are removed. Besides preventing unwanted matings and pregnancies, there are many health benefits to having our dogs neutered.

In female dogs (bitches) reproductive problems like false heats, vaginal hyperplasia (prolapse condition), pyometra (infected uterus) are prevented. Speying also reduces the risk of mammary tumours (breast cancer). The risk of mammary cancer is 0.5% in bitches speyed before their first heat, around 8% in bitches speyed between first and second heat, and around 26% speyed after a second heat.

In male dogs, neutering can limit straying, particularly in response to bitches in season. Castration can reduce unacceptable sexual behaviour towards bitches, people and inanimate objects. Castration can also prevent or remove testicular tumours or reduce perianal adenoma (cancer), or prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate). Prostatic hyperplasia is a common problem in older entire male dogs and can cause constipation and toileting issues.

Neutering causes the loss of oestrogens and androgens (sex hormones) leading to a decrease in metabolic rate, thus their energy needs are lower. Dogs that are neutered should have their diet adjusted to allow for this and to prevent weight gain. In female dogs urinary incontinence can occasionally be associated with speying, especially with neutering at a very young age (<6 months).

In recent years, more research has become available on the appropriate age for neutering. It is no longer a one size fits all recommendation. For larger breeds, early neutering can be associated with an increased incidence of bone and joint issues (e.g cruciate ligament damage, osteosarcoma tumours). With female large breed dogs we need to balance the age of neutering with reducing the risk of mammary tumours and the risk of bone issues.

As a guideline:

- **CASTRATION:**
  - Small Breed**—6 months
  - Large breed**—12 - 24 months (after growth stops)
- **SPEY:** avoid speying when on heat (higher risk surgery); postpone for 2 months
  - Small breed**—6 months; ideally before 1st heat
  - Large breed**—after 1st heat and before 2nd heat; generally after 12 months

Feel free to have a discussion with your vet as we can tailor our advice specifically for your pet.

# Ryegrass Staggers

*Samantha Howarth (Veterinarian - Balclutha)*

As we approach a drier than usual late summer/ autumn this year, younger horses (adult horses can also be affected) may be affected by a condition called ryegrass staggers. This condition occurs when horses are grazed on perennial ryegrass and forced to graze close to the ground. While grazing, these horses consume large quantities of a toxin that is produced by a fungus that naturally grows in the plant. Affected animals appear “drunk” and can worsen if disturbed. There is no cure but an affected horse should be removed from the incriminating pasture and fed “safe” pasture or supplementary feed such as hay. It is imperative to move these horses slowly and, in a stress-free manner to avoid further injuries. The condition will slowly resolve with time.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to speak to your vet





## Cohen

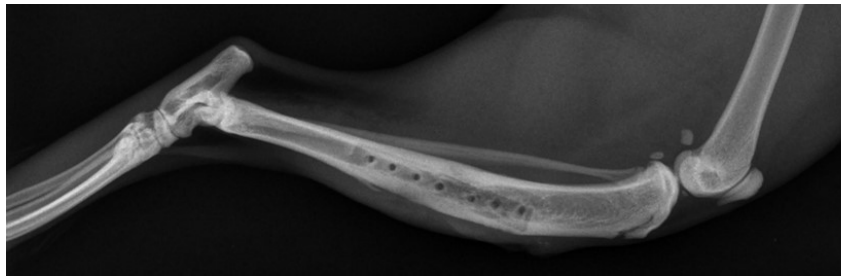
*Peter Heslip (Veterinarian - Balclutha)*

Using bone plates is a common means of repairing fractures. The plate holds the bone in place and the bone heals over a period of 3-6 months. Plates are usually left in permanently as removal can be difficult. We normally only remove plates if they cause a problem, typically 6 months after surgery.

Cohen was a little different in that he had a plate to repair a fracture of the tibia when he was 5 months old. He came back 2 years later with a discharging wound over the plate and the plate visible through the skin. In his case the infection was from cat bites which had caused an abscess down to the bone. This would normally heal with antibiotics, but the presence of the plate and screws prevented the body from getting rid of the infection. We had to remove his plate, which proved difficult. The bone had healed so well that callus completely covered the plate in places. It took the use of bone nibblers and chisels to remove the bone over the plate so that it could be removed. Surgery went well and Cohen is recuperating.



The X-ray shows the healed fracture with the screw holes and the impression of the plate in the bone.



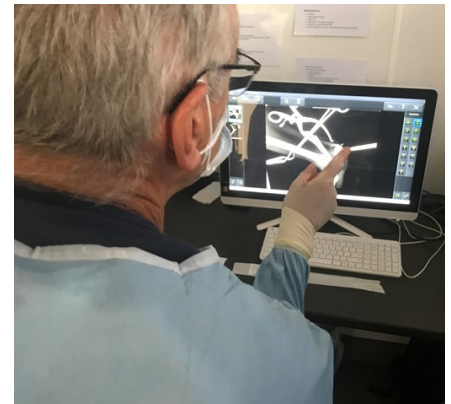
## Smokey the Alpaca

*Peter Heslip, Veterinarian, Balclutha*

As small animal vets we mostly deal with cats and dogs. We see a few rabbits and birds, and (rarely) reptiles. We do not usually deal with farm animals, so it was a first for us operating on an alpaca. Smokey was about 1½ years old when he managed to fracture the calcaneus bone. This bone is the equivalent of the heel bone in humans and attached to it is the gastrocnemius (calf) muscle. If the calcaneus detaches the hock joint collapses and weight-bearing is impossible.

While alpacas look big they are surprisingly light. Smokey weighed less than 40 kg – similar to a large dog. One of our farm animal vets anaesthetised Smokey because the techniques used in ruminants are different to cats and dogs. Fortunately the anatomy in this area is very similar to dogs, though the bones are longer and not as hard. Because his weight was similar to a dog the equipment we use on dogs worked well with Smokey. We repaired the fracture by placing two pins to hold the bone in line and a loop of wire to resist the pull of the gastrocnemius muscle. All went well with the surgery and Smokey is back home.

One of the advantages of a mixed practice is that our skills are complimentary. The companion animal vets and nurses are not familiar with anaesthetising alpacas, and the large animal vets are not familiar with orthopaedic surgery, but together we made a great team.



## Time to get a wiggle on with worms

Samantha Lewis– Veterinarian, Balclutha)



### Did you know...?

...that unlike sheep, using a dag score (dirty bum), is NOT a reliable way of determining when alpacas and llamas need drenching.

*This is because alpacas and llamas do not tend to scour, even when they have very high numbers of worms.*

Camelids (alpacas and llamas) are susceptible to many of the gut worms that infect sheep and cattle, including the barber's pole worm that can cause a fatal anaemia. Unfortunately, we have seen several serious cases of worms in camelids at Clutha Vets in the past 12 months, so having a plan for worm control and drench management is a very important part of caring for alpacas and llamas.

Your worm and drench plan will hopefully balance the need to protect your camelids from becoming sick from high worm burdens, whilst also ensuring that resistance to drenches is being managed. These are some tips and recommendations:

- If not done already, now is a good time to bring in fecal samples to assess the worm burdens in your adult camelids. Ideally, these should be taken for each individual alpaca/llama. If worm burdens are low, they do not need to be drenched.
- If drenching is needed, then single active products should be avoided as their use can speed up the development of resistance. Ensure drench guns are calibrated correctly.
- Wormiest alpacas/llamas are weaners and lactating females. All cria should receive a weaning drench (and also take fecal samples), and then monitor fecal samples every 4 weeks to assess timing for next drench.
- Consider doing a worm check 10-14 after drenching to assess the level of resistance.
- Quarantine drench all in-coming stock.
- Check camelids for anaemia and body condition every time they are yarded.

If you would like help with developing a worm and animal health plan that works for your block and camelids, please get in touch with us at Clutha Vets.

## Take your dog on a 'Sniff-ari'

*Michelle Powell (Vet Nurse; Puppy Class & Dog Obedience Trainer - Balclutha)*

Providing your older dog with mental enrichment is important to keep their minds active and to meet their needs. Even if they can't walk very far, you can take them for a drive to different places and let them sniff new and interesting smells. Not only does this provide mental enrichment but it keeps those old joints moving without overdoing it and becoming too sore.



## Contact Us

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