

## **Veterinary Report MSPCA September 2020**

Milan Veterinary Practice is happy that we were able to renew our agreement with the MSPCA to provide veterinary services. We are now contracted to provide veterinary services to the society until October 2024. As a practice we wish to continue our excellent working relationship with the society, and hope to build on what is already a strong foundation.

As we have done previously, a veterinary surgeon visits Arg Jerkyll weekly. We examine new animals, perform routine vaccinations and microchipping, and follow up on existing cases where necessary. All surgeries are carried out at either our Douglas or Castletown branches.

Over the past year from 1st August 2019 until 31st July 2020 we have carried out the following procedures:

Bitch Spays – 6 (10)

Dog Castrates – 9 (13)

Cat Spays – 125 (126)

Cat Castrates – 96 (112)

Dentals - 20 (34)

Rabbit Spays – 3 (14)

Rabbit Castrates – 5 (6)

Other procedures - 10 surgeries (15)

X Rays - 17 (13)

The figures in brackets relate to April 1st 2018 and March 31st 2019. These figures indicate that the number of neutering and other procedures we have done is lower this year than in previous years.

Our biggest challenge this year has been adapting to working whilst adhering to the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were the restrictions imposed by the Isle of Man government, including adhering to social distancing, not travelling unless essential and working from home where possible. However, as vets we are governed by The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), so we had an additional set of restrictions and guidelines to follow.

We had to continue to provide a service for unwell animals and also for emergencies, whilst ensuring the health and safety of our staff and clients. We closed our Peel and Castletown branches for several weeks, working solely from our Douglas clinic. Our staff were split into two separate working groups, with no contact between the two and a thorough cleaning of the practice between groups. The few staff members who could work from home did so, but the majority of us had to be in the clinic. All routine work including vaccinations, routine health checks, nail clips and any routine surgeries, were all postponed. Vaccinations in both dogs and

cats can be safely postponed for up to 3 months in low risk individuals. At this time, we were contacted by Nobles Hospital and asked if we could donate any spare PPE we had. We donated gloves, aprons, facemasks etc that we could spare to the hospital.

Cases were triaged, and if suitable a phone consultation was carried out initially. The RCVS granted veterinary surgeons' special dispensation to dispense medication without having seen an animal, to restrict the need for travel and also unnecessary person to person contact. However, if the veterinary surgeon then felt it was essential to see that animal, an appointment was made at the clinic. As clients were not allowed into the clinic for the entire lockdown period, we adopted a process of 'car-park' consulting. After an initial phone consult with a vet, an appointment would be made at the clinic if deemed necessary. On arrival the clients would phone into reception to inform us they were here. The vet would then go out to the client and collect the animal from them, while maintaining the 2-metre social distance. We would bring the animal into the clinic and a veterinary nurse would help us to examine and treat the animal. We would then go back outside to the client, return the animal and discuss our findings and treatment plan. Payment would then be taken either over the phone to reception or via our online payment system.

As time went on, and it was apparent that we were going to be living with restrictions in place due to COVID for a prolonged period of time, the RCVS realised things needed to change. We could not postpone vaccines indefinitely, as these animals would then be at risk of serious infections. Similarly, leaving young animals unneutered, would lead to an increase in accidental pregnancies and the issues stemming from this. We therefore started triaging vaccines. Animals that were naïve i.e. puppies/kittens/rabbits that had not yet had their primary courses, were given priority. We also started giving boosters to animals that were due to go over the 3-month grace period. Nail clips were performed in animals where the owners felt long nails were affecting their animal's health. Surgeries including neutering and other non-routine procedures were scheduled.

We are very lucky here on the Isle of Man, that around the time the RCVS advised we needed to start doing more again, the restrictions on island relaxed. Once our reception screens were in place, we were able to re-open our Douglas clinic. Soon we started clinics in Castletown, and we now also have a clinic in Peel once a day. We have used this opportunity to alter our opening hours, to try to provide a better work-life balance for our staff, whilst continuing to provide a service to our patients and clients. Our colleagues in the UK and beyond have had to continue doing consults either with the client outside, or with screens on the consulting tables and wearing face masks and other PPE. We are extremely lucky to be able to return to work as normal. It is certainly a quicker process than the time-consuming back and forth way we had to consult during the lockdown.

Our weekly visits to the society were cancelled throughout lockdown by mutual agreement. We treated what animals we could by phone, and saw those we needed to see at the Douglas clinic, as with our other patients. We were able to restart our weekly vet visits again in July. I am enjoying being able to get out of the clinic and come up to the society each week.

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