

## TheSeaforthHowler

### Editorial

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#### By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)

It only took 2 years after retirement, but Ken Baker has actually left for Queensland! He flew his home built plane, "Ding Duck" in December of last year. The end of a 15 year odyssey. We wish him many happy flying hours.

Nursing, as in the human field, tends to be female dominated. We were lucky enough to have had one of the few male veterinary nurses in NSW, Mark Young. However, Mark has decided to move on career-wise, the lure of computer nursing being too irresistible! We wish him lots of luck for the future.

You may also see Dr Rob Barwell if you visit

Seaforth Vets on a Saturday. We thank Rob for helping out on our all too often busy Saturday mornings.

Commiserations to Ken Baker and family in their loss of Fergus the Staffie. Mad but lovable, Fergus was hit by a car when he wandered off his Queensland property in early January.

We like to remind our readers that our website has been up and running for a few years now and Kath Salier (Nurse) does an excellent job of keeping it up to date and relevant. Drop in to

[www.seaforthvethospital.com](http://www.seaforthvethospital.com) and read her most illuminating article on Tail Docking.

### Ultrasound

#### By Dr David Collins (Veterinarian)

As you may have heard, we have recently purchased an ultrasound machine, so I felt this was a good time to try to explain a bit of how it works and what we can do with it. The beauty of ultrasound is that it is a non-invasive way of investigating internal structures where previously we may have had to resort to open surgery to diagnose problems.

Ultrasound is made up of sound waves with a frequency more than 100 times higher than the upper range of human hearing (hence "Ultra"). Sound frequencies in the range of 2 to 10 MHz (Megahertz) are commonly employed in diagnostic examination. Depending on the anatomical region to be examined, different sound frequencies can be used. The higher the frequency, the shorter the wavelength, meaning better detail for smaller structures. The trade off is that high frequency ultrasound does not penetrate as far, so higher frequency ultrasound waves would be much more useful for a kitten's heart than for a great Dane's abdomen. The pictures that show up on the ultrasound screen are due to the slightly different velocities of sound travelling through various body tissues, for example fluid, fat or internal organs.

At Seaforth we have a Medison digital ultrasound with two multifrequency ultrasound probes (transducers) ranging from 4 to 9 MHz. The frequency of the ultrasound probe can be altered, whilst in use, depending on the need for more detail or more penetration of body structures.

Here are some examples of how we use ultrasound:

**Pregnancy.** Probably the best known use in humans. We can also use it to see if there are any pups or kittens, and even detect foetal heartbeats.

**Abdominal Ultrasound.** Assess internal organs such as liver, spleen, kidneys. See if there are any tumours, abscesses, haematomas etc. The bladder can also be assessed for tumours, stones or thickening.



#### Gossip Column

- **Ken:** Eureka, it flies! Congratulations on Ding Duck's maiden flight.
- **Mark Leaves..** We wish Mark, our vet nurse the best of luck in his new career in IT.
- Congratulations to our erstwhile nurse Concetta on the birth of her baby girl!

Thickness of bowel can be determined.

Cases of pancreatitis can be investigated and confirmed. Even the size of the tiny adrenal glands can be measured.

**Echocardiography.** This is probably my favourite, and it refers to ultrasound of the heart.

It can be used to assess the heart valves, which are often problematic in older dogs. Cats and dogs can have problems with the heart muscle (myocardium), which can be visualised, and the correct medication determined.

Pericardial effusion (fluid in the sack around the heart) looks spectacular on ultrasound, with the amount of fluid sometimes dwarfing the structures of the heart. The problem with this is that it can squash the heart so much, that it can't work properly. What we can do then, using the ultrasound to guide us, is stick a needle into the pericardial sac and drain off the fluid. There are just so many applications!

## *The First Twelve Months with Tec*

*By Virginia Pennefather (Receptionist and Nurse)*

"Tec", a liver coloured, German Shorthaired Pointer (GSP) joined my family in February 2003. He was 8 weeks old, very small and as cute as a button, but I was ill prepared for the impact he would make on my life!

Certainly I've had dogs before – but over the past two decades they've all been adult dogs, rescued from the Animal Welfare League or Pound. Regular readers may recall my exploits with "Allie" a little Papillon X who enjoyed success in competitive agility. Allie, however, is now a little older and I felt she was getting ready to hand the reins to another canine agility successor.

So I started to do my homework and I had my eye on a GSP. I looked into why they had been bred in the first place, i.e. what was their original purpose. I discovered that they were from the gundog family, and were used to retrieve felled birds from the water. So this means they are more likely to have a soft mouth (ensuring that they didn't put tooth marks in the bird, or for that matter, any human body part). The hunting side didn't appeal, but the soft mouth did. I also liked their short (wash & wear) coat and athletic appearance.

Then I found a breeder who I really liked. She let me meet the potential mother and father. Both of whom were absolutely lovely dogs. Very healthy and happy canine individuals. For anyone considering getting a puppy, this is extremely important. Dogs, like children, can inherit their parents' traits – both good and bad.

When the time came, actually collecting him and taking him away from his mum and brothers and sisters was heart wrenching. I'm sure his howls propelled us faster down the M4.

Training started immediately. Tec had to learn to enjoy his own company because I certainly wasn't going to be with him 24 hours a day. Unfortunately I'd heard far too often of dogs exhibiting signs of stress such as chewing, excessive barking or digging because they hated being by themselves. I can't recommend highly enough the concept of crate training for all new puppy owners. Tec's crate was his own little place for warmth and peace & quiet. I could close the door when I

couldn't watch him, and this offered the added benefit of being able to control when – and more importantly - where he went to the toilet. Of course, at night he was in the laundry with paper. Crates are terrific for short term confinement because a puppy shouldn't go to the toilet in his bed, but it wouldn't have been fair to leave him and his puppy bladder in the crate overnight.

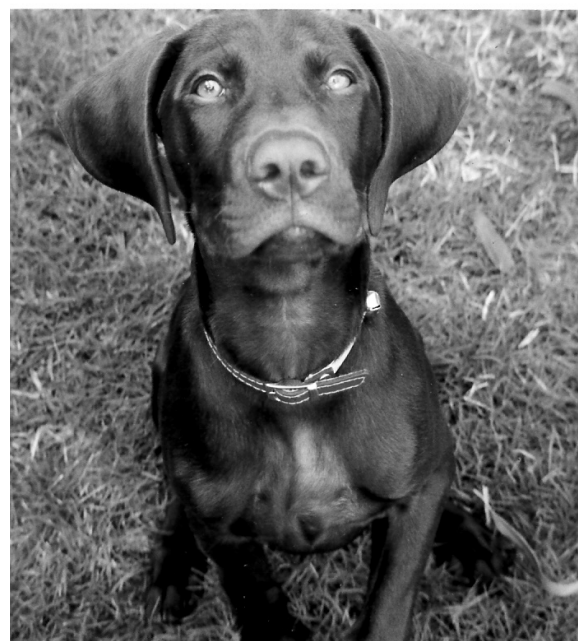
We embarked on Darren & Jenny Head's puppy training which is held here at Seaforth Vets. We had a great time. I was convinced Tec was the most clever, however everyone else thought the same about their own puppies! So I guess that says a lot about Jenny & Darren's classes. Puppy training is fantastic for socialisation and Tec discovered that there are other dogs in the world that don't just look like his littermates.

My philosophy is definitely that a "tired puppy is a happy owner". Those previously mentioned athletic lines contributed to an amazing exercise requirement. At 12 weeks of age he was enjoying an hour of hooting around the park every day! If he didn't get that, then he'd exercise in different ways like digging holes, chewing computer cables and/or vocally and physically harassing Allie. But if I tuckered him out, then all was fine in our household.

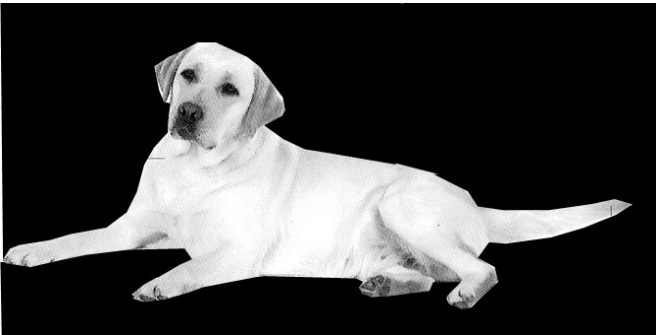
But as he grew, no matter how tired, he always managed to check out what I'd left on the kitchen bench. I'd previously lived in ignorant bliss with small dogs who considered the kitchen bench an unachievable fantasy. Tec thought of it as an extension of his food bowl. He came close to being rehomed after gobbling half a sticky date pudding I'd made for dinner guests that evening. On a positive note he has encouraged my housekeeping skills and I now have a very "minimalist" kitchen.

Tec is yet to embark on any formal competition. He has, however, won his first ribbon! At the Dog Club's Christmas Party he won the Tiny Teddy & Goodo eating competition – well I had to eat the Tiny Teddies and he had to eat the Goodos. Fortunately he assisted me because I'm not partial to Tiny Teddies, and even more fortunately I didn't have to help him eat the Goodos.

All going well in six months time he will make his debut in



the competition agility ring. He's already showing some promise and with any luck in an upcoming edition I will report on the next chapter of Adventures with Tec.



Labrador Retriever

## PostcardFromEllen

*By Ellen Schultz (former nurse—American correspondent!)*

Everyone I met while living and working in Seaforth beautifully shared the Australian culture with me, so to return the favor, I will share with you a bit of life along the front range of the Rocky Mountains in Boulder, Colorado, where we have returned to live.

The elevation here is 7,000 ft or approximately 2,200 M. It is primarily mountainous with a few meadows in a heavily pined forest. Ponderosa pines are the first tall trees you will see as you climb the foothills from the nearby plains. When you scratch the bark of a ponderosa it will smell like vanilla. Aspens also dot the landscape and in the fall turn to a burning gold with shimmering leaves. The oat, wheat and blue grass here is 100cm tall and is interspersed with purple lupine, golden yarrow, sunflowers and thousands of wildflowers. The trees and profuse grasses provide cover, shelter and food for the most enchanting aspect of living at this elevation and location - the diverse wildlife that share our space. Some are as small as hummingbirds but some are very large predators.

Today, there is 5 cm of snow on the ground - an unexpected visitor from late yesterday and into the night. The only sign of life this morning are the expectant eyes of mule deer hoping for a handout since the natural food supply is completely covered. The females are obviously awaiting new life with heavy abdomens, while still tending to their young from last summer. They are heavily furred for the season for protection from the cold. It is -1 °C. Magpies, woodpeckers, nuthatches and squirrels abound at the bird feeder seeking sunflower seeds, while hawks and an occasional eagle soar on the thermals above the mountains. There are many tracks, buried deeply so you can only see plow lines where animals have walked through the deep snow.

Later in the year after the rains have started in late spring and early summer, we may be rewarded with a glimpse of a day old spotted fawn left safely in the tall grasses waiting for its mother to return from grazing. She is always alert to the call of the Abert's (black) squirrel above in the trees who is always on guard for nearby danger.

The often-present omnivorous coyote that lives in every

## Breedsinprofile TheLabradorRetriever

*By Samantha Hiscock (Head Nurse)*

The Labrador Retriever was originally developed in the St Johns region of Newfoundland, Canada on the eastern Canadian coast. The Labrador due to his love of the water, was dubbed the "small water dog". In the 1800's the breed was brought to the port of Poole in Dorset, England, where locals realized the excellent nose and potential ability as a gundog. It was here that the Labrador Retriever soon became one of England's hunting and companion dog. Today the retriever is well known for his gentle, affectionate nature and as a popular assistant dog for people with disabilities. They enjoy exercise and love water, so if you have a swimming pool you need to teach them from a young age where the safest and easiest place is to get in and out. They have a good temperament, are affectionate and are a very obedient breed if trained properly. They are suitable for anyone wanting an outgoing, devoted, family oriented dog. Their favorite activities are being with people whether it's just watching TV or running around the backyard.

<b>ORIGIN</b>	Canada
<b>FIRST USE</b>	Gun Dog
<b>TEMPERAMENT</b>	Gentle, affectionate
<b>COLOURS</b>	Chocolate, Gold, Black
<b>LIFESPAN</b>	12 – 14 Years
<b>HEIGHT</b>	54.5 – 57cm
<b>WEIGHT</b>	25 – 34kg
<b>GROOMING</b>	2 Plus
<b>EXERCISE</b>	3 Plus

state in the US except Hawaii, from sea level to 3,000 m, is one of the dangers. The coyote follows specific foraging routes reused throughout the year, often returning to neighbourhoods to clean out all the domestic kitties and an occasional small dog that may venture outside. "LOST CAT" signs in our area usually signify that the coyotes have returned and to beware - keep all pets inside or on leashed walks.

Foxes are the most common nearby predator, also an omnivore, often eating nuts and berries, while cleaning out the small mice, vole and rat populations. Foxes have scent glands on their pads and mark their regular paths this way in addition to urine and faeces marking for territory. The territory ranges from 25 acres up and they can travel 17 to 50 km nightly in their hunt for food. They sometimes bury their food for later consumption. One esteemed doctor at SVH has been known to gently hand feed a fresh egg to a fox with absolutely no harm to himself or the egg. The egg was later eaten when taken to a safe spot. Mountain lions are nearby also, they are primarily nocturnal, secretive and rarely seen. I consider myself lucky to have sighted one nearby on a hike, not close enough to be of danger, but exciting to see. They are carnivores and have coloured vision - in dim light they see 6x better than humans. They stalk much like domestic kitties, lay in wait for their prey and can jump 7 m from a quiet position.

A good reason for those of us who live in "cougar" country to be

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cautious at dawn and dusk. Our small children do not play outside after dusk!

The glossy furred black bear weighs up to 180 kg, also omnivores. We usually see them in dim light or at night on their way to plump up on apples in late summer or fall for the long hibernation period. They are skilled climbers and often invite themselves into garages or an occasional house to feast on dog, bird or cat food. They can take a bird feeder down from about 8' high with a mere slap of the hand. Barbecues are also commonly raided for a good taste of last night's dinner, scattering pieces of metal and steel over the hillside.

They scratch tree bark and rub their throat scent glands on bushes to mark their territory. They sleep in winter in dens, but awake easily so we are taught "DO NOT DISTURB"! You cannot run from a bear, so better not get yourself into this position in the first place, but if attacked, play dead.

As with the natural renewal of spring from winter, we too await the constant renewal of our wild friends as they birth or return again in the spring - anticipating what small wonder we may share this next season - just around the corner.

## Tick, Ticks and More Ticks!

### By Amanda Salles (Veterinary Nurse)

Well, as most of you already know tick season has begun! We at SVH know it's started when the number of phone calls about dogs with wobbly legs or cats that aren't breathing well, increase.

So here's some general information about spotting the signs of tick poisoning and how you can try to prevent your pet from getting a tick.

#### Signs of Tick Paralysis

Ticks attach themselves to your pet's skin and while they feed they inject a neurotoxin into your pet. The paralysis can take 2 to 3 days to set in. The first signs you'll see will be lethargy and weakness in their hind legs which will gradually progress to their front legs. Breathing can become laboured and wheezy and your pet may also retch or vomit.

The paralysis that starts in the legs will progress through the body and paralyse the animal's organs including their heart and will eventually cause death if they are not treated.

#### Treatment

Once symptoms are present your pet needs treatment from a Veterinarian. We administer anti serum to counteract the tick's toxin. Often the paralysis causes stress in the animal so we also give them a sedative to

calm them down.

The earlier treatment is started the more successful the recovery is. Your pet may need to spend 3,4 or 5 days at a vet clinic until they have fully recovered.

If you notice any strange behaviour or signs of tick paralysis in your pet it is a good idea to contact your veterinarian immediately. If you do find a tick on your pet **REMOVE IT!** There is a misconception that it's bad to remove a tick but this is untrue. Remove the tick using your finger nails, tweezers or a tick hook. Take the tick out at the very base where it's attached to the skin.

#### Prevention

The best way to ensure your pet is tick free is to search them daily, especially if you have walked them in/near bushland or live in area which is known to have a lot of ticks.

When searching your animals, run your finger nails all over the animals skin, between toes, in ears and continue doing the search even after finding a tick in case there are more.

Products such as *Kiltix collars* are good preventatives. They last 6 weeks and are water proof, these can be purchased at your vet along with *Frontline Plus* which used every 2 weeks is also a good preventative. Nothing is 100% which is why daily searches are necessary. More than one search is also a good idea as ticks are easily missed, especially when they have just attached themselves and are very small.

## New range of behavioural therapies

### By Dr Hendrika Tegelaar (Veterinarian)

Many of you will have been made aware of underlying phobias in your dog over the Christmas / New Year period: noisy fire works, summer thunderstorm activity, party's etc.

Most dogs cope with this very well but some become highly anxious and even destructive.

**Virbac** has revolutionised treatment for these behaviours with their research into pheromones – those odourless scents given off by all of us at different times and creating a hormonal cascade beyond our control. Dogs and cats are no different.

The Dog Appeasement Pheromone (DAP) mimics the "scent" produced in the lactating bitch and hence imbues calm in the dog. (If you have ever been lucky enough to see a litter of pups suckling you know how contented they are). This device plugs into a normal power socket and is placed in a suitable room for the dog. It is not a panacea for all problems. They may also require medication, training or other behaviour modifying therapy, however it certainly offers a new and novel approach. The results have been very good and are positively promoted by animal behaviour specialists.

Our feline friends are not forgotten. In fact feline pheromones mimic the facial scents laid when cats "smooch" around furniture, doors and people! They are happy scents and can only be smelt by cats, not dogs or humans.

It is not the purpose of this short article to give you all the information as this requires in-depth assessments and protocols but hopefully it will inspire interest in those clients whose animals need help to overcome a variety of problems.

