

# THE ROYAL (DICK) SCHOOL OF VETERINARY STUDIES



## Exotic Animal and Wildlife Service Newsletter – AUTUMN/WINTER 2009

Welcome to the first edition of our new newsletter! Firstly we have had a lot of new faces this year join our expanding team. Kevin Eatwell and Brigitte Reusch have joined as Lecturers heading up our clinical services at the Hospital for Small Animals. They have been joined by our two new residents Livia Benato and Joanna Hedley. We are also anticipating the arrival of a third resident later in the year. Emma Keeble has also come back on the team after maternity leave and is a familiar face to many of you. Anna Meredith is currently working towards her PhD in wildlife diseases, busy promoting the research side of our work and developing exciting new projects in wildlife health.

### Sad goodbyes

We unfortunately have to say goodbye to two members of staff whose contracts have now finished. Farewell to Lesa Longley, who is doing her PhD and Simon Hollamby who is returning to Australia. They both have been on the clinics for a number of years and will be sadly missed.

### Success of reptile husbandry evening

An evening on captive reptile care was held during July. A total of 75 keen reptile owners, zoo keepers and pet shop staff filled the room at the Hospital. Kevin Eatwell one of our lecturers spoke for over two hours on critical aspects of husbandry and was well received. Refreshments were available and in combination with donations made £75 to help fund future evening events for clients. Our thanks goes to The Aquatic Centre, Comely Green Place for loaning the variety of heat and light sources, so people could have a look at the types of products available. UV light testing was also available.



### Evening surgeries on trial

We are now trialling evening surgeries for our first opinion clients. Surgeries will be held on Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays and appointments can be made via reception. It is hoped these clinics will provide an increased level of service and make us more accessible. We are also creating a new 'quiet pet corner' of the waiting room (on the right as you come in) for our exotic patients so they are less stressed! This will be filled with reading materials and information about our services and what products we have available.



What's in this month's newsletter:

1. News.
2. Staff profile.
3. Future meetings and events.
4. The parrot in respiratory distress.
5. Patient profile.

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## STAFF PROFILE

**Brigitte Reusch** BVetMed(Hons) CertZooMed MRCVS  
Lecturer in Rabbit Medicine and Surgery  
Brigitte joined the Exotic Animal and Wildlife Service in December 2008 and she is the first Lecturer in Rabbit Medicine and Surgery in Europe and is RCVS Certified in all exotic species. She helped set-up and run the Rabbit Clinic at Bristol University and has over six years of experience in first opinion and referral rabbit medicine and surgery. Being a rabbit owner of two Belgian hares, Franz and Anuk has also contributed to her enthusiasm of these wonderful pets. Brigitte in combination with the other lecturers, residents and nurses of the service can now offer a higher level of care for all first opinion and referral rabbits. To book your rabbit for an appointment in our 'rabbit clinic' just phone reception.



## Parrot health check week

Following our successful tortoise and rabbit weeks we are having a week for owners of cockatoos, macaws, parrots, parakeets, cockatiel, budgerigars – in fact any psittacine! Appointments will be available during the week of 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> September with an evening meeting for owners, held at the Hospital for Small Animals. Kevin Eatwell will be lecturing on 'How to have a happy and healthy parrot'. Kevin has over 25 years experience of keeping and breeding parrots and parakeets as aviary birds, but has also extensive experience at hand rearing parrots and keeping them as pets. He is also involved with the budgerigar fancy having kept exhibition budgerigars for many years. Should you wish to join in the fun then please phone reception and they can book you an appointment and register you for the meeting.

## Pre Hibernation Checks

Once again we are holding pre hibernation checks for tortoises this time through individual appointments over a two week period running from 28<sup>th</sup> September to the 9<sup>th</sup> October. An evening event, including lectures by Gidona Goodman and Kevin Eatwell, will be held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September. The meeting will be held at the Hospital for Small Animals and all are welcome to attend the evening. Please contact reception to book your place for the evening meeting and your tortoises free health check during the week.

## Rabbit evening

We are pleased to announce we have teamed up with the Rabbit Welfare Foundation, the UK's biggest rabbit welfare charity, to offer an evening meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September starting at 6pm at the Hospital for Small Animals. Brigitte Reusch our lecturer in rabbit medicine and surgery will be lecturing on 'Rabbit care for Autumn and Winter'. Please visit our website or telephone reception for more details and to book your place for the evening meeting.

Full details of all these events are on our website [www.dickvetexotics.com](http://www.dickvetexotics.com).

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## The parrot in respiratory distress by Kevin Eatwell

Respiratory problems are common in pet parrots. This can affect the upper respiratory tract leading to sneezing and eye or nasal discharges. In these cases dusty irritants can be involved, but specific infections that can pass to humans may be present. In some cases the bird's voice may change if there is infection of the syrinx, which is the area of the bird's trachea responsible for vocalisation. Birds in this situation are emergency cases and need treatment to bypass the blockage.

Lower respiratory tract disease is also possible and can be due to lung or air sac problems and infections. Many birds can present due to an acute inflammatory response after being exposed to toxins such as PTFE from non stick frying pans. Others have fungal or bacterial infections. A final group of birds may not have respiratory disease but have either fluid or a mass compressing the air sacs and limiting the bird's ability to breathe.

### Clinical examination and approach

It is important to quickly identify which of these problems has occurred as the treatment will, of course vary. In severe cases the best advice is to keep the bird cool, get it into fresh air and bring the bird in to be checked over. Birds with more minor disease should be seen the same or the next day.

A detailed history and brief physical examination can usually guide us to identify which of these problems is most likely and this guides our emergency treatment but also what diagnostic procedures are required.

Critical birds are placed into an oxygen cage to stabilise them prior to treatment or a more detailed physical examination.

Birds have a unique respiratory system involving air sacs and in cases of blockage an air sac tube can be placed under anaesthesia. This is a risk to a bird in these situations as the bird is unstable

and the aim is to get the tube placed as quickly as possible. These cases do require anaesthesia by facemask and once the bird is asleep, an area of the body is surgically prepared, a hole made into the air sac and a sterile air sac tube placed. This allows the bird to breathe much easier.



Alfie the parrot being nebulised.

Other birds are less critical and diagnostic tests can be performed without the need for an air sac tube. X rays, blood samples and placing an endoscope surgically into the body cavity can be used to assess the bird. This obviously requires anaesthesia so the bird is still and pain free. In birds with blockages the endoscope can be passed into the windpipe. Birds with respiratory signs may also need to be screened for infectious agents, such as Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD) or *Chlamydophila* infection. These can be tested on blood, feather or faecal samples. It is wise to bring in a poo sample from your bird, when you visit the vet, to check for *Chlamydophila* as this causes Psittacosis and can be transmitted to people.

Once the diagnosis has been made treatment usually involves a stay at our hospital for intensive care. In severe cases treatment may not be possible. Longer term many patients are treated at home with a nebuliser (of the type used in people) which are used to supply drugs by inhalation.

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## Patient profile by Brigitte Reusch

As the lecturer in Rabbit Medicine and Surgery, I see quite a lot of wonderful rabbits with a variety of health problems. In this feature I would like to introduce you to one of my favourite characters.



Humphrey is a handsome three year old, male, Harlequin rabbit. He was referred to the Rabbit Clinic for a persistent left nasal discharge. He also has cheek teeth malocclusion (misalignment of teeth), so he is unable to wear down his cheek teeth evenly, despite being on an excellent diet of mainly hay and grass. X-rays of his skull showed that he has severe dental disease. A lot of his tooth roots have elongated as Humphrey is unable to wear them down fully. The cause of his discharge was not obvious on the skull x-rays. Standard x-rays produce a two-dimensional

image. The skull bones are like a box, so you cannot only look at one side fully without getting overlap from the other sides of the skull. This is why Humphrey had a Computed tomography scan (CT scan). A computer is used to generate a three-dimensional image of the inside of an object from a large series of two-dimensional X-ray images. This showed that his first upper cheek tooth had fractured and one of the fragments had migrated up into his sinus.

Pus had formed around the tooth fragment. A very small endoscope (camera) was placed in Humphrey's left nostril and allowed us to visualise the pus that was draining from his left sinus region. The tissue in this very small area was also very swollen. Surgery was carried out to remove the bone fragment and some of the pus.

Humphrey made a very good recovery from surgery. He is still on some treatment for a mild sinusitis, but overall he is a lot better.

Humphrey's story has shown me how complicated dental disease in a rabbit can get and how a runny nose, may not be as simple to treat as first thought. Fortunately Humphrey has helped us as much as he could, by eating straight after his anaesthetics and taking all his medications. His owner was very involved with his care, so we were able to work together well with his own vets as a great team.

## **EXOTIC ANIMAL AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**A. Meredith, MA, VetMB, CertLAS, DZooMed MRCVS**  
**K. Eatwell, BVSc (Hons), DZooMed MRCVS**  
**B. Reusch BVetMed (Hons), CertZooMed, MRCVS**  
**E. Keeble, BVSc, DZooMed, MRCVS**  
**G. Goodman DVM, MSc, MRCVS**  
**L. Benato DVM, GPCert (ExAP), MRCVS**  
**J. Hedley BVM&S MRCVS**

Normal opening hours are:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 8.30 am – 7pm, Wednesday & Friday 8.30am – 5pm.

For an appointment or an emergency please phone: **0131 650 7650**

For the latest news visit our website [www.dickvetexotics.com](http://www.dickvetexotics.com)

