



Mount Hutton
PET HOSPITAL

Paws, Claws And More

Mount Hutton Pet Hospital Newsletter

Winter Edition 2014

Shop 15, Progress Road

Mt Hutton NSW 2290 Phone: 4947 1311

www.mthuttonvet.com.au

Email: reception@mthuttonvet.com.au

Rat Bait Toxicity

In the last month, we have seen an unusual amount of dogs that have ingested Rat Bait. When your beloved pet eats this poison, is it very serious and can be life threatening if left untreated.

The Active ingredient in Rat Bait is an anticoagulant, which in simple terms means that it will cause the blood to stop clotting. This means that the blood vessel walls break down, causing internal bleeding, hypovolaemia, shock and death.

Your pet will not actually show symptoms of rat bait ingestion immediately, it usually takes 1-5 days to show symptoms. These symptoms include:

- Lethargy
- Vomiting and Diarrhoea
- Bleeding from mouth, nose or any orifice
- Blood in urine and faeces
- Bruising under the skin
- Continuous bleeding from wounds or cuts
- Seizures or muscle tremors
- Difficulty or laboured breathing

If you see or suspect your pet has ingested rat bait, **contact us immediately on 49 471 311**. Quick treatment is vital, and if you remember, bring the poison packaging with you.



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Hurry! 20% off Desexing and Dentistry

Mount Hutton Pet Hospital is currently offering 20% off desexing, to coincide with the NSW National Desexing Month. This offer is for Dogs, Cats, Rabbits and Ferrets. We are also offering 20% off dentistry work on your dog or cats teeth!

If you would like to take advantage of either of these wonderful offers, please contact us on 49 471 311 ☺



WARNING - Hendra Virus Case in NSW

I have just received a warning from the Australian Veterinary Association informing Veterinarians in NSW that a case of the potentially fatal Hendra virus has been reported in the Murwillumbah area. The Hendra virus is a dangerous and potentially fatal viral disease that is believed to be transmitted by bats (primarily flying foxes). Many species and, most importantly, humans can be infected and fatalities are common. The virus mainly affects horses and the case in question occurred in a horse. Dogs have become infected after exposure to diseased horses. The disease is highly contagious and is easily transmitted from affected horses to other mammals, including humans. Sadly, Vets that have unknowingly treated undiagnosed Hendra cases in horses are at great risk and deaths are reported. If Hendra is suspected then strict biosecurity safety measures must be implemented. I am aware that many clients, and even staff at Mount Hutton Pet Hospital, own or are involved with horses on a regular basis and it is these people who are mostly involved in this situation.



The reported case was in a 31 year old stock horse that was found in a dam on a property west of Murwillumbah. The horse was recumbent and exhibited neurological symptoms including progressive paralysis and muscle tremors. Unfortunately, despite intensive Veterinary treatment, the horse died. Blood samples were positive for Hendra virus. Other horses on the property have not shown any symptoms. No dogs were on the property. Regular flying fox activity occurred in the close vicinity. The case highlights several important points. Even though most cases of Hendra have been reported from northern NSW and southern QLD, an outbreak as far south as Newcastle is definitely possible. Significantly, flying fox vectors are very active in the Newcastle region and the horse population is widespread. We are now entering the season when Hendra virus is most commonly reported, that being the cooler months. Considering that the vector (bats) and the host (horses, dogs, and humans) occur in the area, a Hendra virus case is a definite possibility in the Hunter Valley. All Veterinary surgeons, horse owners and handlers are urged to be on the alert for horses that have become sick and, especially, if they exhibit neurological or acute respiratory symptoms, however mild.

The disease can appear in a variety of ways and the public are encouraged to avoid contact with sick horses at all times. Report the case to your local Veterinarian or the Department of Primary Industries if you are unsure or if you suspect that a horse may be affected. This disease is a serious potential public health risk and the public is encouraged to be on the alert. An effective vaccine is available for horses and vaccination is encouraged. The danger to humans is remote but possible, and being aware of the risk is vital. Horse owners need to be informed as to the possibility of infection. Public education is the only way to avoid serious health issues.

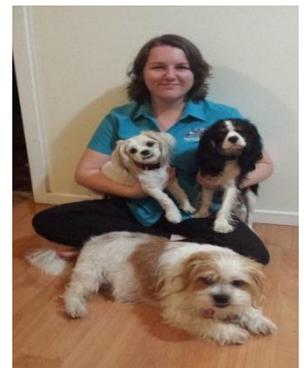


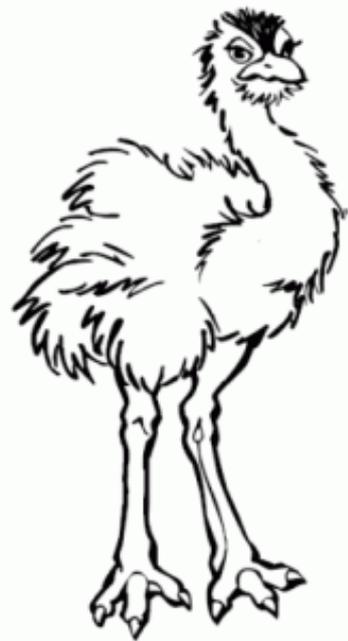
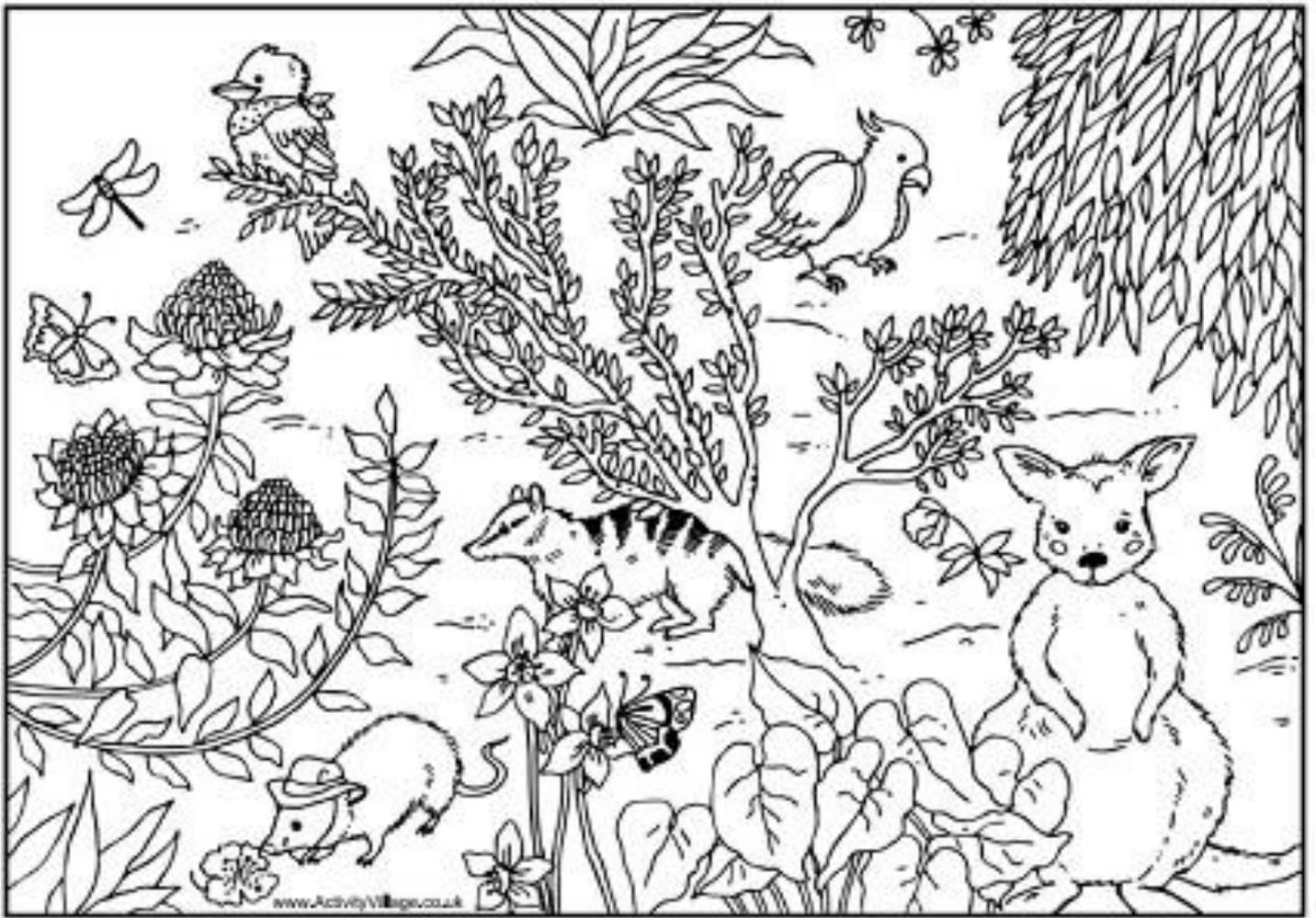
Dr Ray.

Staff Profile - Sherridan

Hello my name is Sherridan and I have been working at Mt Hutton Pet Hospital for a little over a year now as a veterinary nurse and have just recently started to teach Puppy Preschool on Wednesdays which is a lot of fun ☺.

As most people know I have a lot of animals, I have 6 dogs; Jemma being my oldest at 13, her niece Molly who is 10, Charlie who is 5, Eddy who is nearly 2, Chloe who is 1 and my beloved one eyed Cavalier Kasey who just turned 1. I also have a lovely cat Abby who is 8 and thinks she's a dog. I have a few more animals but I'd be here all day writing about them J I look forward to seeing and meeting you in the future.





emu

WINTER WORD SEARCH

Y E O T N I M T W I C Y N S G
O T Y L C L E I C C O B B N N
S K S I J K L E T D L L Q O I
X C C O C U S A Q T D O G W D
R L A A R K D C B B E N N I D
E S J R A F O V C W I N K N E
F Y B T F A I K S Z O S S G L
Z Z I B T L W E E D S N T T S
S N O W M A N E V F L D S V I
G C M X Z W R I R E T N I W D
F P X I X F Y A V J U W J V S
E K A L F W O N S C H I L L Y



CHILLY

FREEZING

ICICLE

SCARF

SNOWBALL

SNOWMAN

COLD

ICESKATING

COAT

FROSTY

JACKET

SKI

SNOWFLAKE

WINTER

MITTENS

SLEDDING

Southern or Common Death Adder

The Death Adder is truly a unique snake and is probably my favourite Australian reptile. From its melodramatic name (often mis-named Deaf Adder) to its characteristic appearance, no other snake could be mistaken for this highly venomous Australian elapid. Unlike most other venomous snakes found in this country, the Death Adder has a short, hick-set body that is more like the Vipers from overseas. However, it is a true Elapid, with fixed fangs in the front of the mouth. The fangs of the Death Adder are some of the longest of all Australian snakes and its venom yield is quite large given its relatively small size. Classification of the Death Adder genus is very controversial but 3 main groups are recognised and only one is found in the Hunter region. These various groups often overlap in distribution and several local populations have been created to recognise differing features or appearance. The 3 main types are the Northern Death Adder from the tropical north of Australia, typically north Queensland and the Northern Territory. The Desert Death Adder is brightly coloured to match the arid landscapes of central Australia where it dwells. The Southern / Common Death Adder is found in temperate climate zones, is less brightly coloured than its tropical relatives but is the largest of the three types. This article will examine the Southern type only as it is the only variety that may be encountered in the Hunter region. The Southern Adder has a base colour that is usually grey or red but the colour may vary with shades of yellow, brown, grey and black often



found. The average adult length is around 50 to 60 cm but specimens up to a metre in length have been recorded. The body is thick and heavy with females being generally much larger than males. Whilst normally fairly placid in nature, they will strike with great speed and accuracy if seizing prey or defending themselves. Some researchers consider the Death Adder to be the fastest striking snake in the world over a distance of 6 inches. When threatened, the snake will flatten its entire body to seem larger to potential predators. The Death Adder is said to have the most effective biting mechanism of any Australian venomous snake. The venom is highly potent and contains almost entirely neurotoxins – the most lethal venom component. Before antivenom to treat bites was developed, approximately 50 to 60 % of Death Adder bites in humans were fatal – an extremely high percentage. The venom is also rapidly fatal to most domestic animals. Bites are fairly common due to the snakes' habit of lying concealed in substrate, especially leaf litter, and being almost impossible to detect. In addition, the snake is unlikely to move if humans approach and will rely on concealment to avoid encounters. As a result, many bites resulted from the snake being trodden on and it reacting aggressively. The long sharp fangs can easily pierce clothing and deliver a large amount of venom in a very short time. The Death Adder can be found in a variety of habitats but favours virgin bushland with a dense cover of leaf litter in which to hide. Open country, especially coastal heath habitats are a favoured site. Unfortunately, the Death Adder is especially susceptible to environmental degradation and habitat destruction and will only live in pristine virgin habitats without a human presence. The snake is mainly nocturnal in nature and becomes most active on warm nights with low moonlight. Mature males, looking for females to breed with are the most active. When feeding, the snake adopts an ambush method, lying concealed in leaf litter and waiting for potential food to approach close enough for an effective strike. Prey includes all suitable vertebrates, including birds. A remarkable and unique feature of this snake is its ability to “caudal lure” its prey to within striking distance. This involves the snake wriggling its brightly coloured tail (usually yellow and white with a black spine on the end) to imitate a worm or grub. When a bird or mammal attempts to grab this food morsel, it becomes a meal for the lurking Adder. The tail lure is usually wriggled directly in front of the snakes' mouth and prey rarely escapes the lightning strike, long fangs and potent venom.

Breeding occurs mainly in autumn and spring and five to forty live young (not eggs) are born in late summer or early autumn after a seven to nine month gestation. Young Adders are small brightly coloured versions of their parents and are red or grey. Red is the dominant colour but a litter of young snakes may contain both colours. They are usually about 15 cm long when born and generally take two to three years to reach adulthood, depending on food availability. Death Adders are considered to be fairly abundant locally but are extremely hard to find due to their habit of concealment. They are sparsely distributed in the Hunter region with two major populations where they are commonly found. Unfortunately, habitat destruction by land clearing and grazing has caused these snakes to abandon previously occupied areas. It is said that Death Adders are the first snakes to move out when humans move in. Of all Australian snakes, the Death Adder is the most complex and unique. With its combination of ambush hunting technique, wriggling tail lure, lightning strike, huge fangs and potent venom, the Death Adder has evolved a highly successful method of predation and defence and, in my opinion, stands alone among Australian snakes as a fascinating example of reptile evolution.



Pre-Anaesthetic Blood Testing

Mount Hutton Pet Hospital is now encouraging a Pre-Anaesthetic blood test before your pet undergoes an anaesthetic. This test is run in our pathology area (getting us results within 10 minutes) and checks the function of your pet's liver and kidneys - the two organs that process an anaesthetic. It is important to make sure these organs are working correctly before we go ahead with an anaesthetic, to prevent damage to these organs. We recommend especially dogs and cats over the age of 7 years to have this blood test before having an anaesthetic, and young animals have this test, to give us a healthy baseline for future testing if your animal becomes unwell. For any further information, please contact our staff on 49 471 311.

Weather Warning to Reptile Keepers

A relatively mild autumn has given way to real winter temperatures. If you have been reading my articles, you will be aware of the importance of maintaining your reptile pet at their preferred optimal temperature. This figure represents the ambient environmental temperature at which a reptile species performs at peak efficiency in terms of general health. This value varies according to the species and its natural home range of distribution. For example, a tropical reptile such as an Olive Python requires a warmer temperature than a temperate species such as a Diamond Python. Should a reptile habitat not be kept within this temperature range, then serious health issues may occur. All body systems of reptiles require heat for proper function. Most importantly, the immune system will be suppressed if inappropriate temperatures occur for extended periods and serious disease is a real possibility. This factor is most important for tropical species that are not native to the Hunter region.

As you may notice, reptiles in the southern states, including the Hunter, undergo a period of hibernation in the cooler months to survive the chill winter months. Local reptiles find a safe sheltered place to "sleep" the months away until aroused by the arrival of spring and its warmer weather. The hibernating reptile's metabolism slows to such a point that barely any energy is required for normal body function and most organ systems slow down to almost inactivity. This survival adaptation allowed reptiles to colonise cooler climates where suitable year-round temperatures do not occur. Reptiles go into hibernation from about May to September, varying with the onset and finish of the cold months. In the tropics, suitable temperature occurs for a period that allows the animal to function, even if night-time temperatures fall drastically. Hibernation allows energy and body reserves to be conserved and permits a shorter feeding period to provide sufficient nutrition. Tropical species do not hibernate (or brumate) as such and are actively feeding all year round.

The question of whether to allow a temperate pet to hibernate is a question for the keeper to decide and is the subject of much discussion. If breeding is planned, then a period of cooling is essential to stimulate the reproductive cycle. If a reptile is not being bred then active warmer temperatures can be maintained year-round, even in southern species. Personally I favour an "endless summer" for any temperate species and have never encountered any problems to date. Keeping a reptile in captivity insulates the animal from most potentially damaging influences - for example predators, weather extremes etc. For this reason, it is absolutely essential that a proper artificial environment is maintained in your reptile's enclosure that reflects the ideal conditions for survival. Your reptile's health depends on it. Only a few variables need to be monitored and maintained, mainly temperature and humidity. This may seem easy but any deviation from ideal conditions results in drastic and far-reaching consequences for the health of your pet. Mammals can be more durable in terms of surviving temperature extremes but evaluating a reptile using mammalian standards will lead to disaster. Reptiles function on a more simple level and differ drastically from mammals in this regard. In practical terms this means that you should perform a thorough check on your reptile enclosure and habitat. Ensure that lights and heaters are functioning properly and even changing them for new units is not a bad idea (cost permitting). Check thermostats (if used) are working properly. It is a good idea to perform a complete substrate and habitat change before the depths of winter arrive and allow some time for the reptile to adjust to its new environment. Be more vigilant to malfunctions in your equipment as this is the time of year that requires it to perform at peak efficiency. Following a few simple rules keeps your pet safe and healthy. Good luck but more important is good management.

Lost/Stray Animals

Due to recent injuries sustained by staff from stray animals, we regret that we are no longer able to admit stray animals brought into the hospital by members of the public. We are not legally obligated to accept or care for any uninjured animal found by any person.

If you find a stray animal, please contact: **Lake Macquarie City Council on 4921 0333 OR RSPCA on 4927 6822 Located at 75 Elizabeth Street Tighes Hill.** We will continue to help injured stray animals and wildlife but can no longer afford to risk our staff and clients by handling stray dogs and cats.