

Amanda's Diary

We continue our monthly update with RGT co-ordinator Amanda Ainsworth on some of the issues that she and the headquarters staff have been tackling in recent weeks.



THE effect on charities of the on-going financial crisis is more widespread than is often imagined. One aspect seldom considered is the extra pressure put on the veterinary budget.

Amanda says: "We've started getting calls from people who haven't been able to afford to keep their pet insurance going and asking if we can help."

"I hate to turn them away, but we are feeling the pinch ourselves."

Amanda also has evidence to suggest that some vets view the RGT as being similar to a pet insurance company.

She said: "I do not believe that any vet purposely gives treatment that isn't required. But sometimes the treatment is more 'thorough'. The reality is, if you take a pet dog to a vet one of the first questions they ask is 'is he covered by insurance?'."

"When he isn't, and the bill is paid by the individual, the cost tends to be a bit less. There is some evidence to suggest that the RGT gets charged more for certain treatment that an owner taking the dog to a vet themselves."

Overall, greyhounds are an incredibly healthy breed. The biggest killer by far appears to be bone cancer.

Amanda says: "I don't have figures to back it up, but there seems a general susceptibility at about eight or nine years old. If they clear that stage, then most dogs seem to live to around twelve to thirteen."

"I have had first hand experience of bone cancer and the scary thing is how quickly it strikes."

"My mother's retired bitch went lame one day, nothing apparently serious, but when we went to take her to the vet, her leg shattered as she went to jump into the car."

If it is caught early enough, amputation is often highly successful. While the thought of a three-legged dog is repugnant to some people, Amanda has an extraordinary alternative view.

She said: "I came across my first amputee when I was fostering dogs. I was very uncomfortable about the whole idea but the woman who phoned up had just taken on a dog after his operation and she was hysterical."

"I offered to take the dog on and he was obviously in great distress. I remember that first night laying on the settee with him and he was whimpering uncontrollably."



Sadie

"By the following morning he was as right as rain. He got up, ate his breakfast, and although he knocked the wound a few times in the next couple of days, he was entirely happy."

"Over the years I have seen many dogs have legs amputated and the key is the first 48 hours. Once they are over that, they soon settle down. I've even seen some bounce back within a few hours of the operation."

"It isn't the solution in all cases. It is a lot easier for a dog to adapt if he loses a hind leg. It is also better if they are young, but they can go on to lead happy and full lives."

Even more bizarrely, it is far easier to home a three-legged dog than one with an obvious deformity.

Amanda says: "People don't like to see dogs deformed by injury, such as a badly set bone. They assume it is painful and will probably lead to health problems, particularly arthritis as they get older. In some cases they are right of course."

"In the cases of broken hocks that have healed badly, the problems are often far greater than if they had had the leg removed."

"Resetting a badly broken bone is not the difficult part, but the skin often doesn't heal properly. I've seen cases go on for months and in one case cost around £14,000 before the leg had to be amputated anyway."

Given that the NHS sometimes has to refuse treatment to patients on the grounds of cost, how does the RGT make those

difficult decisions? Amanda says: "I can truthfully say, hand on heart, that we have never refused a dog treatment on the grounds of cost - though it has been a close call on a number of occasions."

"Branches have even come to us and said, 'if we can raise the money can we go ahead?' and we've supported that decision."

"Ultimately though, it is quality of life that is my first priority. I will never support the principle that a dog should be kept alive, just because it is medically possible."

"In some cases the branches want somebody else to make the decision for them, which I totally understand."

Conversely, there is the case of Sadie, one of three pups that the RGT agreed to take. Except when Sadie arrived, it transpired she had a broken leg that hadn't been treated.

Amanda said: "She was only very young but I think the operations alone came to around £2,500. It would have been a lot more had the vet, a specialist in orthopaedics, not offered to do the work for nothing. But look at her, how could you possibly say 'no?'"

ANOTHER aspect of the economic decline is its effect on racing kennels. Some are finding that they cannot afford the space for the pensioners, others are facing a complete shut down.

Amanda says: "When a trainer gives up, most people think about homing the racing dogs. They tend to forget that most trainers also

keep a few old dogs as well.

"In the last couple of weeks we have had a couple of Pelaw trainers and a Kinsley trainers ask us to take three or four dogs at a time."

"We also had 15 from Nick Meade who packed up at Nottingham and another 16 from Graham Holford."

"Graham's wife Liz tragically died recently and she used to look after all their retired dogs."

"As trainers decide to get out of the industry, we can expect more and more of these type of situations, in addition to the regular stream of dogs that retire naturally."

"By far the most tragic though are the cases where the dog's owner cannot keep them any longer due to their own age or illness."

"Quite often, the much loved dog is the elderly person's closest companion in the world."

"We've had a couple recently. Former Wimbledon hurdler Broadacres Dan belongs to an elderly gent has to go into an old people's home. The other dog belongs to someone who has been taken ill with a very poor prognosis."

"We take the dogs in of course but they are as distressed as the owners. It is heart-breaking."

WHEN it comes to homing greyhounds, bitches are easier to home than dogs, and spayed bitches would seldom be on the waiting



Retirement Plans

list for more than a month.

Amanada says: "In terms of what we are asked to take in, we probably average around four dogs to every bitch. I think some of the bitches that we don't see are sent for breeding - though not necessarily to produce greyhounds."

"Even when they come in though, they are usually easily to handle and can usually be kennelled up with a dog."

Males and females are automatically neutered before they are homed and Amanda believes the operations could be carried out during breaks in training.

She said: "In the case of spaying, the owners of pet dogs are

allowed to let them off the lead after a week. It would obviously be a bit longer with a greyhound but it isn't a major operation."

"The cost of spaying varies from around £90-£160 depending on location and we have been very impressed with the Vets4Pets organisation who work alongside the Pets At Home branches and Companion Care who are also a franchise operation."

"They obviously carry out a lot of these operations and the results we have seen are very good."

One point though - don't wait for the bitch to come into season - many vets won't spay until at least three months after estrus.

Event	More Info	Date	Branch
Open Day	Kennels Open Day May 1st 10am till 4pm.	Sun 1	Wisbech
Mid Suffolk Show	Stonham Barns, Stowmarket, Suffolk,	Sun 1	Greyhound Homer
Kite Festival	Kite Festival, Driffield Show Ground.	Sun 1/Mon 2	Hull
Suffolk Country and Game Fair	Two day event at Glemham Hall, Little Glemham	Sun 1	Greyhound Homer
Family Fun Day & Dog Show	At Coral Brighton & Hove Greyhound Stadium	Mon 2	Brighton & Hove RGT
Bilton Gala, Harrogate	Greyhound Buddy	Mon 2	North Yorkshire
Local Charities Day	The Square, Church Stretton. 9am to 4pm.	Sat 7	Shropshire and Borders
Pets at Home, Foss Islands, York	An ideal opportunity to find out about retired greyhounds	Sat 7/Sun 8	North Yorkshire
Robin Hood Game /Country Show	Brentwood Centre, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9NN	Sat 7-Sun 8	Essex - Greyhoundhomer
Animal Charities Fun Day	Par Events Field, Par, nr St Austell, Cornwall	Sat 14	Cornwall
Bronte Vintage Gathering	More details: http://www.bronte-vintage-gathering.co.uk/	Sat 14/Sun 15	W Yorks. Huddersfield/Wakefield
Eastbourne Dog Show	Hampden Park Sports Ground BN22 9QR	Sat 14	Brighton & Hove RGT
Shropshire Show	West Midlands Showground, Shrewsbury. GRSB	Sat 14	Shropshire and Borders
Fun Dog Show	St Giles Kennels, Wrantage, Taunton. TA3 6DJ	Sun 15	Dorset & Somerset
Colne Community Country Fayre	Church Road, Brightlingsea, CO7 0QL	Sun 15	Essex - Greyhoundhomer
Greyhound Walk	Quarry Moor, Ripon.	Sun 15	North Yorkshire
Dog Fun Day	Sledmere House, Driffield, YO25 3XG	Sun 15	Bridlington
Devon County Show	Westpoint Exeter.	Thu 19/Fri 20	Devon (East) - Honiton
Dobbies, Shrewsbury	Collection with dogs needing homes at Dobbies	Sat 21	Shropshire and Borders
Hadleigh Show	Animals plus funfair and crafts etc.	Sat 21	Greyhound Homer
Meet and Greet	Meet and Greet at Swanland Nurseries	Sun 22	Hull
Young Farmers Country Show	YFC Centre, Whitbread Barn, CM3 3LQ	Sun 22	Essex - Greyhoundhomer
Denbigh/Flintshire Countryside Fair	GRSB will have a stall with merchandise, tombola & info.	Sun 22	Shropshire and Borders
Heighley Gate Meet n Greet	Garden centre just outside Morpeth on the A697	Sat 28	Northumberland
5th Annual Fun Dog Show	Pelaw Grange Stadium - open to all breeds of dogs	Sun 29	Durham - Pelaw Grange
Sutton Park Walk	You are welcome to come along tel Heather 07971832854	Sun 29	Birmingham - Perry Barr
Victorian Fair	St Agnes Victorian Fair (Vicarage Road & Churchtown).	Mon 30	Cornwall
Shrewsbury Lions Charity Day	Charity stands, a funfair and entertainment.	Mon 30	Shropshire and Borders

Greyhoundhomer RGT
"finding forever homes for Greyhounds"

Grand Summer Draw

First Prize: £500
Second Prize: Trip for 8 on the Indigo Dreamer worth £200
Third Prize: Hamper & various small prizes

Tickets £1 Each

Draw to take place on Sunday 11th September at Essex County Show Barleylands

Tel: 01708 551689
www.greyhoundhomer.co.uk

GREYHOUND EXTRAVAGANZA
SUNDAY 5 JUNE 2011

GREYHOUND SHOW + ALL BREEDS FUN DOG SHOW

To be held at the Annual Health Trust, Bostford, nr. Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7JL

Teahouse • Refreshments • Doggie Porting/Showers available • Picnic Area

Greyhound show with classes for pet greyhounds of all ages

Entry Fee £3.00 per class
Registration Fee £0.00

Judging commences at 11.00 a.m. in three rings
Spectators for all classes and courses for all entries

For full details visit our website or contact our office on 01284 831111

Can you help raise funds for THE RGT?

Contact Amanda on 0844 8268424 for more details

GREYHOUNDS MAKE GREAT PETS