Oral squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is a common disease of elderly cats. In fact, a quick survey of the 50 most recent proliferative or inflammatory feline oral cavity lesions submitted to Gribbles Veterinary’s Palmerston North laboratory for histopathology revealed 27 cases of SCC. In many cases, the tumour has infiltrated the underlying maxilla or mandible at the time of diagnosis and the prognosis is very poor. In that sense it is not a particularly satisfying diagnosis, and the question becomes: can anything be done to prevent such a dreadful disease?

Risk factors for many human cancers are well known. These include genetic factors and environmental triggers, with the latter thought to be more significant contributors to most common sporadic cancers. Well recognised examples include ultraviolet light (melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma), excess alcohol consumption (oropharyngeal, oesophageal, and liver carcinoma), cigarette smoke (mouth, pharynx, oesophagus and lung cancer), and asbestos (mesothelioma). Knowing these risk factors means that, to some extent, avoidance strategies can be used to reduce the likelihood of cancer.

Can the same be said for cancer in pets? Although the data is limited on the risk factors for feline cancers, there are a few well-known associations. These include ultraviolet radiation and cutaneous SCC, papillomavirus infection and Bowenoid in-situ carcinoma, and chronic inflammatory bowel disease and intestinal lymphoma. So what about oral SCC? A small number of studies shed light on some possible risk factors: these include exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, the use of flea collars, and a diet of predominantly canned food. In addition, the expression of COX-1 and COX-2 by SCC cells, and our observation that feline oral SCC occasionally develops in a background of eosinophilic or plasmacytic inflammatory disease (Figure 1), supports a role for chronic inflammation. Interestingly, the use of flea shampoo substantially reduces the risk, perhaps because regular washing reduces the exposure to carcinogens in the coat when cats groom.

Some take home messages for owners could include:

- Just as in humans, cancer risk in our pets is associated with environmental and lifestyle factors;
- Environmental tobacco smoke, flea collars, and a predominantly canned food diet may increase the risk of mouth cancer in cats;
- Any sign of oral pain or inflammation in cats should be attended to promptly so that inflammation can be controlled and neoplasia can be caught early.

Bernie Vaatstra
‘Tis the season to be itchy - Allercept® reminder

Well, it’s great to see so many practitioners taking advantage of our current promotion on Allercept® Canine, Feline and Equine Allergen Panels. We always see a surge in ‘allergy’ enquiries from dog and cat owners via our website at this time of year but, in conjunction with the allergy article in the latest SPCA Animals’ Voice magazine, we have seen this more than double since the start of December. With all these people being referred directly to their local veterinarian for professional assistance, it’s no wonder we’re now seeing so many additional submissions.

Just in case you missed it, the summer issue of the SPCA’s popular Animals’ Voice magazine features an article written by Gribbles Veterinary’s Kevin Darling about allergies in dogs, cats and horses, together with an advertisement directing pet owners to their local veterinarian for further information and testing options. To coincide with this, Gribbles Veterinary is running a promotion on its Allercept® Canine, Feline and Equine Allergen Panels throughout the months of December, January and February, with testing slashed from $250.53 (excl. GST) to just $199.00 (excl. GST). Client information flyers are also available free of charge to assist clinic staff when discussing allergy testing with animal owners.

The Allercept® serum IgE test is used following a diagnosis confirming atopic dermatitis in cats, dogs and horses. Accurate identification of the causative allergens is crucial for effective allergen-specific immunotherapy. Allercept® Canine, Feline and Equine Allergen Panels use a unique, proprietary technology developed by Heska to detect only allergen-specific IgE, resulting in more accurate test results.

Panel tests include:

- Storage Mite and House Dust Mites, the most common environmental allergens;
- Patented Flea Saliva Antigen to identify hypersensitivity to flea bites;
- List of allergens as recommended by specialist veterinary dermatologists for Australasian conditions.

Allercept® allergy testing requires a serum sample (minimum of 1mL) collected in a plain collection tube. Mix the tube thoroughly by gentle inversion approximately 5-6 times and store at 2-8°C prior to delivery. Deliver to the laboratory as soon as possible following collection. Testing is performed at our laboratory in Melbourne, Australia, with turnaround times of approximately 3 weeks.

Follow up immunotherapy treatment in New Zealand is offered by registered specialist, Allan Bell, and Duncan Graham, who has a special interest in veterinary dermatology.

For further information about this promotion, or to request client information flyers, please contact your business development manager or your local Gribbles Veterinary laboratory.

Rest In Pets biodegradable pet caskets

Gribbles Veterinary is proud to announce that it has been selected as the veterinary channel distributor of Rest In Pets biodegradable pet caskets for Australia and New Zealand. These beautifully engineered and branded products are designed specifically for helping children deal with the grief of losing a pet. Available in small, medium and large, these caskets will accommodate anything from a stick insect, goldfish, mouse or guinea pig to a rabbit, cat or small dog. All of the products come flat packed in an eye-catching, retail-ready box with easy-to-follow assembly instructions. Included in the pack are a bonus keepsake photo frame and a temporary grave marker. Most important of all, the caskets are personalisable, enabling children to farewell their pet in their own special way. Recommended Retail Prices range from $20.00 (incl. GST) for the small casket up to $45.00 (incl. GST) for the large casket. An urn for pet owners wishing to have their pets cremated is also available for $30.00 (incl. GST), and is suitable either to store the ashes in temporarily or to use as a scatter box using the easy pull tab.

For further information, or to request a copy of an article about helping children cope with the loss of a pet, suitable for clinic newsletters, please speak to your business development manager or contact your local Gribbles Veterinary laboratory.
World Buiatrics Conference - Cairns, 2014: BVD symposium announced

Between the 27th July and the 1st August 2014, the Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV, a special interest group of the Australian Veterinary Association) and the World Association for Buiatrics will be hosting the XXVIII World Buiatrics Congress in Cairns, Australia.

Buiatrics is the study of cattle and their diseases, and the World Buiatrics Congress is recognised as the “Olympic Games of conferences” for people working in this field. This congress is the official gathering of the World Association of Buiatrics, of which ACV is a member organisation. The congress has been held in a different part of the world every 2 years since its inception in 1960, and has an average attendance of between 1,500 and 2,500 delegates at each event. For further information or to register go to: http://wbc2014.com/

Running as part of the XXVIII World Buiatrics Congress is a special symposium on bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), also known as bovine pestivirus, tentatively entitled ‘BVD - to control or not to control’. This will include a number of well-known experts in the field of BVD diagnosis and control including the distinguished Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Pathology from the Royal Veterinary College in London, Joe Brownlie; Professor Horst Schirrmeier who leads the viral diagnostics laboratory and national BVD reference laboratory at the German Federal Research Institute (Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut); Dr Enoch Bergman, a veterinary practitioner and advocate of BVD testing based in Western Australia; Dr Peter Kirkland, Senior Principal Research Scientist from the Elizabeth MacArthur Agriculture Institute, home of the OIE Reference Laboratory for BDV virus; and Gribbles Veterinary’s own Dr Fraser Hill, Specialist Veterinary Pathologist and prominent member of the New Zealand BVD Steering Committee (www.controlbvd.org.nz) since its inception back in 2005.

BVD causes significant production losses to both the dairy and beef industries and, in New Zealand, at least 60% of cattle have been exposed. A survey conducted by Taylor (2010) between 2007 and 2009, showed that the prevalence of BVD-exposed herds in Australia was also invariably high, ranging from 82% in Queensland to 100% in South Australia and Western Australia. Recent New Zealand figures for infected dairy herds estimate the losses at about NZ$150 million for the industry and NZ$220 per cow in an infected herd. These losses include increased abortions, calving inductions, calving to conception interval and services per conception, and decreased milk production.

The perfect microbiology sample

In a microbiologist’s dream world the perfect sample is taken aseptically, placed in a sterile container or an appropriate transport media, couriered at 4°C, arriving at the laboratory within an hour of sampling complete with a submission form that includes a full history. It will be adequately sized to enable sampling for anaerobes, will contain any interesting lesions, won’t overflow its container, nor require advanced engineering to get it out. The container will be clearly labelled and leak-proof.

Sadly we live in the real world, with little or no control over many of these factors. However, there are some simple precautions that you can take to improve the speed, accuracy and conclusiveness of the results from microbiological testing:

- Use sterile pottles (submissions in jam jars and gloves are to be avoided);
- Use a different container for each sample submitted;
- Use transport medium swabs rather than dry swabs;
- Refrigerate samples until they can be transported to the laboratory.

If you are unsure as to which transport media to use for a particular sample, or if you have any questions whatsoever regarding your microbiology submissions, simply contact your local laboratory. We can supply transport media for viruses, chlamydia, campylobacter, trichomonas and mycoplasma, plus blood culture bottles.
**What’s up Doc?**

*What’s up Doc?* is a regular feature that provides practitioners with an opportunity to test their diagnostic skills. Questions are posted periodically with answers appearing in the following issue of the *Paws, Claws and Udder Things* newsletter.

A mob of 400 dairy heifers had been grazing a large tract of grassland in the central North Island of New Zealand in late autumn. Three heifers had died; a fourth heifer was moribund.

The moribund heifer was recumbent, depressed, and did not respond to stimulation. Churning of the surrounding ground indicating she had been thrashing about earlier. As the prognosis was hopeless the heifer was humanely killed. At necropsy all the tissues appeared normal; however, the objects pictured (right) were recovered from the rumen contents.

... *What’s up Doc?* Send your answers to Karen Cooper (karen.cooper@gribbles.co.nz) to be in the draw to win a bottle of wine.

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**Using the pooled BVDv antibody ELISA test**

This test has proved very popular with practitioners as they assess the likelihood of exposure to BVDv in groups of non-lactating animals. Data analysis when the test was developed showed persistently infected (PI) animals were only in groups of cattle where the S/P ratio of the pooled sample was greater than 0.88. No PI was found in cattle groups with an S/P ratio of less than 0.75 (Hill et al., Vetscript, May 2010).

The statistical validity of the test was based on pooling sera from 15 animals over 10 months of age. If the number of samples is decreased, so the statistical value drops. Nine is the minimum number of samples able to be tested where the result derived still has value. For this reason, if you request the pooled BVDv antibody test but send fewer than nine samples, individual tests will be undertaken.

The price of a pooled BVDv antibody test is $48.46 (excl. GST). Individual BVDv antibody ELISAs are $12.87 (excl. GST) for each animal.

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**Contact us**

Contacting Gribbles Veterinary couldn’t be easier:

auckland.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz  
hamilton.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz  
palmerston.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz  
christchurch.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz  
dunedin.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz

Alternatively, you can contact us using our Free Phone number (0800 474 225) or by using the online enquiry service, available through the Gribbles Veterinary website: www.gribblesvets.co.nz

Last but not least, please feel free to contact your local Business Development Manager:

Jimmy Douglas (North Island) - 027 476 7714  
Jack Gillman (South Island) - 027 476 7713

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**Breaking news**

- Due to the low volume of test requests for FIP Antibody ELISA (Feline coronavirus), we will now be batching this testing on a Wednesday at our Auckland laboratory. Should you have an urgent case (please indicate this on submission form), we will aim to test same day (depending on time of receipt - the test takes several hours to perform) and will then test any pending cases at the same time.

- Gribbles Veterinary has recently renewed its contract with AsureQuality for the provision of specimen and data collection services as part of our MineralCheck package (submission forms available [here](#)). The prices for line/ mob and animal specific specimens and data are as follows:

  - Collection of line/ mob specific data - $39.50
  - Collection of animal specific specimens or data - $47.40

*Prices are exclusive of GST*