



FEBRUARY
2026

The Better Pet

Gazette

h i g h l a n d s v e t e r i n a r y h o s p i t a l . c o m . a u



It's a time for love, flowers, and—of course—delicious treats. But while you're enjoying chocolates, candies, and baked goods, remember that many of these romantic indulgences can be dangerous for your furry friends.

Take note - Chocolate is Toxic: Even small amounts of chocolate can cause vomiting, diarrhea, rapid breathing, increased heart rate, and seizures in dogs and cats. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate are especially hazardous. Keep all chocolates—boxed, bagged, or wrapped—well out of reach. If your pet has eaten chocolate and you are unsure if you should contact your vet, visit this chocolate toxicity calculator [here](#) where you can plug in information and it will tell you if your pet is in danger.

Other Hidden Dangers: Sweets containing Xylitol (a sugar substitute often found in peanut butter), raisins, macadamia nuts, and alcohol are also toxic to pets. Even a single piece of sugar-free gum or a bite of fruitcake can trigger a medical emergency. Always check the ingredient list before feeding to your pet.

What to Do: If you suspect your pet has eaten something unsafe, contact us here at HIGHLands immediately on 4872 1144. Quick action can save lives.

Safe Ways to Celebrate: Show your love with pet-safe treats, extra playtime, or a new toy. Remind guests to keep their snacks to themselves and store all goodies securely. A little caution ensures your Valentine's Day is filled with love—not emergency vet visits.

NexGard Spectra special

Keep your dog protected and save at the same time!

*For a limited time, when you **buy 6 months of NexGard Spectra**, you'll receive a **BONUS month FREE!***

NexGard Spectra covers your dog against: fleas, ticks, mites, heartworm and intestinal worms.

One tasty monthly chew = complete peace of mind.

Pop in and see our team to grab yours, or give us a call if you'd like to put one aside. Your dog will thank you! This great-value offer won't last forever, so don't miss your chance to stock up and save.



**NEXT LEVEL
PARASITE PROTECTION**

See product labels for full claim details and directions for use.
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*more on
our cancer
screening
device...*



When you discover a new lump on your pet, it's completely natural to hope it's nothing serious.

Many pet owners adopt a “wait and see” approach, hoping the lump will go away or stay the same. However, research shows that **around 50% of dermal or subcutaneous lumps in dogs go undiagnosed.**

Delaying assessment can sometimes mean delaying treatment, which may affect outcomes for our beloved companions.

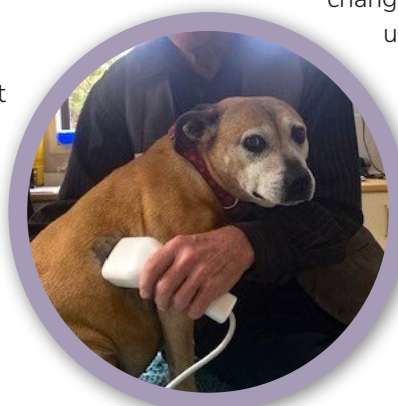
Why Early Detection Matters

Skin lumps are surprisingly common in dogs, and not all are harmless. Here are a few important facts every pet owner should know:

- **1 in 4** dogs will develop cancer in their lifetime
 - **47%** of dogs over 10 years old will not survive cancer
 - **1 in 3** cancer-related deaths in dogs are due to skin cancer
 - **21%** of these skin cancers are Mast Cell Tumours (MCT), which can be aggressive if not detected early
- Early detection can make a huge difference in treatment success and your pet's overall quality of life. Even lumps that appear small or harmless can sometimes hide serious conditions.

Signs to Watch For

Not every lump is cancerous, but it's important to keep an eye out for warning signs. Rapid growth, changes in shape or color, ulceration, or lumps that feel hard or fixed are all reasons to get your pet checked promptly. Even small or soft lumps deserve attention—early assessment gives the best chance for successful treatment.



Introducing HT Vista: Quick, Gentle, and Reliable

Because we understand how worrying a new lump can be, we offer lump checks with our HT Vista early cancer detection test—it delivers on-the-spot results, helping determine whether your pet's lump needs further investigation. The test is quick, gentle, and stress-free, providing peace of mind when you need it most.

How We Can Help

Booking a test is easy with one of our experienced vet nurses. Your pets rely on you to notice changes early. Don't wait and hope—taking action now could save their life. Call us today on 4872 1144 to book your appointment.

Highlands Veterinary Hospital has a fresh approach to determining if lumps and bumps on your pet need treatment, with the HT Vista cancer screening detection device.

This non evasive, procedure is a simple 40-second scan of your pet's lump and it can determine if it's benign or if we should perform more tests. This scan is fast and pain-free connecting us with the answers we need to determine the next steps for your pet.

Here's how it works:

- We will clip the fur around the lump on your pet.
- The lump is scanned (takes about 40 seconds).
- HT Vista gives us results on the spot!

SPECIAL OFFER WORTH \$100!

We'll check one lump on your pet free of charge (valued at \$100). Please mention this offer at the time of booking to claim. Contact us on 4872 1144 to schedule your appointment.



rat bait ALERT



This cheeky little pug-cross came in to see us today after his owner suspected he may have eaten rat bait.

We induced vomiting straight away, and a significant amount of bright pink bait was recovered — quick action that may have saved his life.

If you suspect rat bait ingestion, call us immediately — rat bait is life-threatening and early treatment is critical. Bring the bait packet or a photo if possible to help identify the toxin.

Signs can include: lethargy, pale gums, coughing, bleeding, vomiting blood, bruising, or breathing difficulty — though pets may show no signs at first.

Most rat baits stop blood from clotting, causing internal bleeding days later. If you think your pet has eaten any rat bait, come straight in.

upcoming f LIVE TALK

too hot to handle

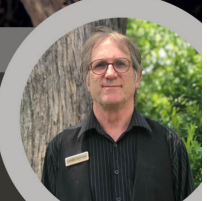

recognising heat exhaustion in dogs

@ facebook.com / highlandsveterinaryhospital

f LIVE Highlands Veterinary Hospital
04 FEB • 2026 • 12:30PM

Veterinarian Dr Diederik Gelderman will discuss how to recognise the signs of heat exhaustion in dogs and what steps owners can take to keep their pets safe in hot conditions.

Join us on your lunch break:
04.02.26
@ 12:30pm



Heat exhaustion can turn dangerous fast — especially during an Australian summer. Excessive panting, drooling, lethargy, wobbliness or confusion are early warning signs, and in severe cases dogs can collapse. Knowing what to look for and what to do next could save your dog's life. Join us as Dr Diederik explains the key signs of heat exhaustion and the simple steps every pet owner should know to keep their dog safe in the heat.

*Please listen in on Wed, 4 Feb at 12.30pm on our Facebook page **here**. If you are unable to attend this Facebook talk, you can find the recording in the Live section under the More menu for up to one month after the live - or click **here**.*

JANUARY FACEBOOK LIVE TALK RECAP

“Cost vs Care: Why Vet Bills Aren’t Just About Money”

Veterinary costs are always shifting, and pet care expenses are increasing. Many factors affect the cost of pet care, including the type of medicines and medical equipment that your vet uses — these vary from basic tools to the Gold Standard in care, which is the best and most expensive care you can get. In simple language, you get what you can pay for.



Dr Diederik always advises owners to think carefully about what they can afford and plan accordingly. Whether this is pet insurance or a pet saving account, plan while things are good. Don't leave it until your pet is desperate for treatment. To listen to Dr Diederik's latest live talk on Facebook, just click **here**.

*To view any of Dr Diederik's past live sessions, just go **here** - it will be available for one month after the live.*

watch out

*summer snake season
is upon us!*



This year has seen a remarkable surge in snake sightings, with these elusive reptiles appearing in some truly unexpected places—reminding residents that snake season is in full swing, and that vigilance is essential.

From suburban backyards to local parks, these encounters aren't just a concern for people—pets are at risk too, so knowing how to keep your furry friends safe is more important than ever.

Common Hiding Spots

Snakes prefer areas where they can stay concealed. Overgrown lawns, thick shrubs, and garden beds offer cool, shaded spaces that snakes find appealing. Many species are drawn to dams, creeks, and backyard ponds. Roof spaces and under houses gaps in roofing cavities can become hiding spots, especially if they provide warmth and protection. They also love compost heaps and mulch piles—these spots are warm and attract small animals, making them ideal for snakes looking for both shelter and food.

Snakes seek environments that help regulate their body temperature—cool during the heat of the day and warm at night. They also choose areas where prey is abundant and where they can remain undetected.

Common Hiding Spots

- **Be mindful** when gardening, moving outdoor items, or walking in bushland. Snakes may hide under mulch, in shoes, or beneath objects left on the ground.
- **Check Before You Step:** Always look before placing your hands or feet in areas where snakes might be concealed, such as piles of leaves, garden beds, or storage sheds.
- **Secure Your Home:** Keep doors and screens closed, and seal gaps where snakes could enter garages or houses.
- **Supervise Pets and Children:** Ensure pets and children avoid tall grass, bushy areas, and piles of debris where snakes may hide.
- **Know What to Do:** If you see a snake, remain calm, back away slowly, and do not attempt to handle or capture it. Contact a licensed snake catcher for assistance.
- **First Aid:** In the event of a bite, keep the affected person still, apply a pressure bandage, and seek medical help immediately.



Helping Paws
HIGHLANDS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Helping Paws – filling an urgent need for pets and owners who find themselves strapped for cash and in desperate need of help for conditions that will not wait until the 'right time' appears.

In some medical emergencies, it is never the right time, and those that are in desperate medical need – well ... they need help now! That is why we started Helping Paws.

We encourage locals and businesses to support this venture through donating items for the gift baskets we offer as prizes in our regular raffles.

Thanks to everyone who have donated prizes or bought tickets, your help has been amazing. Thank you!



The Better Pet Gazette is a monthly newsletter full of informative articles and tips on pet health as well as updates on what's happening at the practice. We hope you enjoy the read!

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need an appointment?
BOOK ONLINE