

The Estuary Rat Club



Newsletter

Vol 3 issue 1
April 2005

The Estuary Rat Club Newsletter

The ERC newsletter is published four times a year. Contributions are welcome at any time, contributors are advised to keep a copy of any material submitted. If you would like your articles or drawings returned please include a stamped addressed envelope.

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Editor's Piece

A Good Mixture

Nick Lockett

Well, I hope that you find this issue to be a good mixture of articles.

There's some important news about Club organisation which needs your consideration before the AGM.

Agility is well covered because events are now taking place at NFRS shows as well as our 'socials'.

Those of you who are not in the NFRS may not have seen Bev Reeve's article on tumour treatment which appeared in Pro-Rat-a. Bev agreed to its being reproduced here and the NFRS kindly provided an electronic copy. The non-surgical treatment is particularly interesting but please remember that it is experimental and that the ERC cannot vouch for its effectiveness or for the absence of side-effects.

Still on the subject of health, you now have until the end of May to register for the Healthcare Day - but the sooner the better.

On the lighter side you can read about Snowy, discover Florentines and try to invent captions and logos.

At the moment it looks as if we may be short of material for our summer issue so please see if you can come up with an article or some pictures (by June 30th). Alternatively you could write a letter and launch our letters page.

I promised an article on 'bat-detectors as rat-detectors' for this issue but I'm still not happy with some of the information I've collected. Please be patient, it will appear eventually.

**National Fancy Rat Society
P.O Box 24207
London
SE9 5ZF**

www.nfrs.org

**For a membership form please
send a sae to the above address or
print the form from the web site.
NFRS membership forms will be
available at all ERC events**



Spring 2005

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Committee Changes

Nick Lockett

Those of you who attended the first Rat Healthcare Day in Goodmayes last April may remember that there followed a short impromptu club meeting at which the acting committee was appointed. It was all done very quickly and since then some of the appointees, upon reflection, have decided that they would have difficulty fulfilling their duties. Others felt that perhaps they weren't in the position that best suited them or was in the best interests of the club.

By the end of 2004 the future of the club was beginning to look rather uncertain and in my capacity as chairman I engaged in a somewhat undemocratic annealing process. My main object was to ensure that the club continued to function but also, since these actions were taken without the approval of the membership, to ensure that we could present ourselves as a responsible committee at our first AGM and to win the support of the membership.

The present committee structure is shown on page 2. You will note that some members have exchanged positions others are new. We welcome Paula Hunter as Treasurer, Mark Sutton as Membership Co-ordinator and Lian Vince who has returned to fill the post of Events Co-ordinator which was vacant last December. I would like to thank Matt Creaney who agreed to allow me to combine editorship of the newsletter with manage-

ment of the website.

From my perspective the new arrangement appears to be working. Mark has recruited four new members, Paula is getting the accounts under control (see below for some outstanding issues) and Lian is winning increasing support from the NFRS for agility events to take place at their shows.

Un-banked Subscription Cheques

The process of finding a treasurer and opening a bank account for the club has taken rather a long time with the consequence that some subscription cheques were out of validity at the time of presentation. We have managed to deal with many of these through personal contact at shows and socials but there are a few outstanding ones. The remaining invalid cheques are being returned to their owners with this issue of the newsletter with a request for a new one to be sent to the Treasurer.

Website

www.estuaryratclub.org.uk has been modified a little. The content is much the same but the homepage has been modified to place a greater emphasis on club activities.

Prospective new members can still find information about the club's aims by following the relevant links.

There is more work to be done on the site so if you have any comments or suggestions please contact the Editor.

Rat Healthcare Day

18th June 2005

This repeat of last years much appreciated event and will be held at the

**Animal Ark Veterinary Centre
54 Goodmayes Avenue, Goodmayes
Essex, IG3 8TW**

The main session is a two-hour talk given by Lyndon Basha MRCVS on all aspects of healthcare, basic first aid, learning about the most common ailments rats get and the treatments available. Learn about alternative therapies, how to deal with simple things yourself, how to make up and use saline solution and rehydration fluids, how to make up your own first aid kit. After the talk there will be a question and answer session which will provide an opportunity for you to discuss particular problems you may have encountered.

New this year will be demonstrations by Lyndon of a surgical procedure (assuming that a willing patient is available on the day) and by natural healer Lisa-Maria Forbes of her approach to the treatment of rat ailments.

A few ratty items such as necklaces, earrings, hammocks, cage blankets, rat ropes, rat bags, sacks of Megazorb and Safebed will be on sale after the talk. For those who missed last years event there will be a bag of samples, information leaflets and a folder full of handouts which cover every subject discussed.

The start time is t.b.c but will be early afternoon. A light buffet will be provided before the start of proceedings.

Tickets are £7.00 each for ERC members (£8 for non-members) and places are limited to 25. Tickets will be issued on a first come first served basis but priority will be given to those who missed last years event.

If you would like to attend please request an application form by sending an SAE to:

**Lora Colver
RHE Tickets
102 Lynn Road, Ilford
Essex IG2 7DX**

At the time of printing only 8 places were left so, if you haven't done so already, please register your interest as soon as possible.

Surgical and non-surgical treatment for tumours

Bev Reeve

How many times have you heard that someone's rat has been put to sleep because of a tumour? Upsetting isn't it! Not only is it disgusting that a vet would put an otherwise healthy animal to sleep but it's infuriating when you know something can be done.

I thought I should write about my personal experiences with tumour removal and what I know of non-surgical treatment in the hope that it could help someone else's rat. I am *not* a vet. It's always best to seek the advice of your vet before acting on anyone's advice.

First of all, you should know that a tumour is *not* an instant death sentence for a rat. Most lumps that rats develop are benign (not cancerous) and can easily be removed.

You should *always* make a point of having them removed when the lump is still small if possible. The larger they get, the longer the rat may have to stay under the anaesthetic meaning more danger to the rat, and the larger the incision would be, meaning more stitches and more discomfort for the rat. Never attempt the surgery yourself. This can lead to infection which can kill.

When you find a lump on your rat, can you be sure that it is a tumour? Could it be an abscess? Abscesses can occur anywhere. They're usually but not always caused by an opening in

the skin, through a scratch or bite, that bacteria have got into. Then the wound has closed over it so the bacteria fester and create pus, which causes a swelling under the skin. These should ideally be treated by a vet, opened, kept open and cleaned with saline solution (*not* hydrogen peroxide), and antibiotic should be given.

Once you're sure your rat does have a tumour, what do you do? Well, as long as your vet is experienced in rat surgery it's quite a straightforward procedure to remove a tumour. As I said before, most are benign and without much of a blood supply so it can be as easy as making a small incision (as long as the tumour is still small) and popping the lump straight out, then closing with a couple of stitches. Voilà, your rat is delumped!

Complications are rare and the vet



Bev's doe Angelina with a fairly typical large tumour on her left flank



An exceptionally large tumour which was removed from a doe called Crystal when she was about 18 months old. It was originally being treated with Mycoplex Coriolus but after treatment was unavoidably stopped for a few days it grew to this size.

As you can see it had a very healthy blood supply which probably explains why the Mycoplex worked as well as it did. Crystal lived for some while after surgery eventually dying of natural causes.

will usually know if they are likely before he undertakes the surgery although there is always a risk when putting any animal under anaesthetic. Fortunately, most tumour removals take only a few minutes.

Complications that can arise are things like the tumour having grown around an organ, being attached to an organ, or being caused by bone cancer. Even in such extreme cases, if your vet is good enough, something can be done.

If your rat is elderly or has respiratory problems, the vet will probably not want to operate which leaves you with the idea that nothing can be done and that your beloved pet will eventually have to be put to sleep. This is *not* the case.

My vet introduced me to a wonderful natural treatment called Mycoplex Coriolus which is made from the Coriolus (also known as turkey tail) mushroom. I've used this many times and have had excellent results with it. It can either slow the growth of the tumour, buying time for recovery from, say, a respiratory infection so

that surgery is possible, or it can stop growth completely, or it has been known to force the tumour into remission. Nobody is quite sure why it works but the way it works is by starving the tumour of its blood supply thereby killing it. Needless to say, the less of a blood supply the tumour has, the less effective Mycoplex will be. If there is very little blood supply it may not work at all. But these cases are less common. Mycoplex has usually done something for my rats, however small the effect, and can work against both benign and malignant tumours. Although it won't actually shrink existing fatty lumps, lipomas, it can slow their growth.

Although I've never tried this myself, Mycoplex Coriolus can be used in conjunction with Maxigen II, which is shark cartilage. It works by boosting the effects of the Mycoplex. Both of these are natural treatments and are safe for your rat. In fact Mycoplex is also used to boost the body's natural immunity, so is beneficial in other ways as well.

Mycoplex is also very good to use

after the tumour has been surgically removed to prevent regrowth. Ideally, the Mycoplex should be started while the tumour is still small for the best effects to be possible although I have had some positive results on reasonably large tumours.

Where to buy

Mycoplex Coriolus can be bought online from www.Animalsnaturally.co.uk and is best bought in tablet form. You could also ask your vet if he would be able to supply you with some.

Maxigen II (also known as shark cartilage) can be tricky to find, but two online stores that carry it are www.auravita.com and www.solgar.co.uk, (search for shark cartilage rather than Maxigen), and it's also sold in many branches of Holland & Barrett as 750mg capsules.

Dosages

Mycoplex - Initially for the first two weeks of treatment to give a boost, one quarter of a tablet should be given twice a day, reducing to one quarter of a tablet once a day for the life of the tumour or rat.

Maxigen – This should be given alongside the Mycoplex at a dose of one seventh of a 750mg capsule once a day.

Once the tumour has died, the Maxigen can be stopped completely, and the dosage of Mycoplex can be reduced to a maintenance dose of one eighth of a tablet once a day. If the tumour has been surgically removed, give at this dose to help prevent re-

growth. If there is regrowth or a new growth in a different area, go back to giving one quarter of a mycoplex tablet and a seventh of a Maxigen capsule once a day.

The Mycoplex should be crushed to a powder and divided into doses, each dose is then mixed with the Maxigen (if you are giving that as well) into something tasty for the rat. I've used the following which have all been readily yummied up by my rats: strawberry milkshake, strawberry syrup, chocolate syrup, melted ice cream, chocolate spread. You get the idea. If it is something that they would consider a huge treat, then you only need a small amount on the tip of a spoon, just enough to disguise the powder in it and they'll fall upon it with great relish.

The only downside to using Mycoplex is that if a tumour dies, an abscess may sometimes form in its place but these are easily cared for at home or can be treated by your vet.

I have a website (<http://www.freeweb.com/miscrats/>) which shows images of tumours and other things that I have had removed from my rats, and also has links to further information on Mycoplex Coriolus.

If anyone would like to contact me my email address is:
bevluvsrats@aol.com



Snowy

Nick Lockett

Snowy was my first real rescue in the sense that she had suddenly become unwanted. She had been left at the Blue Cross Rescue Centre in Felixstowe at the end of last year and a Yahoo group posting drew my attention to her plight. The Centre was anxious to have her homed before they closed for Christmas. I offered to take her if they couldn't find anyone nearer. They couldn't, so on the 17th December I went to pick her up.

I arrived to find that the Centre had been forced to close to all but appointed visitors because of an outbreak of flu' amongst the staff. This meant that there was a receptionist and, as far as I could tell, one other person dealing with the animals. It was also a busy time because the volunteer dog-walkers were arriving to collect their charges.

Snowy was in a large Ferplast cage placed in a corner of the reception area. She had built a nest on the floor of the cage as far from the cage door as possible. The receptionist suggested that while he completed the paperwork I should transfer Snowy to my carrier.

I had spoken to the Centre on two or three occasions before my visit and was surprised that they didn't really know why Snowy was there. They said that she was six months old and that the previous owner had had her for four. They described her as handleable but added that she had bitten the vet'. I set about trying to perform the transfer.

I had brought some raw carrot with me and managed to entice her out of her corner. All seemed to be going well until she bit me hard so that I dropped the carrot which she then carried triumphantly back to her nest.

By now the dog-walkers had gone and the other member of staff came to help. We moved the cage to an open area and dismantled it from around its occupant. With the aid of a towel we managed to guide Snowy into my carrier and snapped the lid on.

Back home, the next transfer was easy. I had prepared a hamster cage with lots of bedding, a tube to hide in and plenty of varied food. I opened the carrier and tipped it towards the open door of cage. Snowy just sauntered in. For the next couple of days, apart from checking that she had food and water, I left her to adapt to her new home and to realise that it belonged to her.

Having got her settled *in* the cage, the next hurdle was to get her to come out of it. She was so cautious it was funny to watch. She would very slowly creep down the ramp with one back foot clamped on the bars. She would go as far as she possibly could with her back leg stretched out behind. The slightest noise and she would shoot back into the cage as if on elastic. Eventually she did let go and wandered round the table picking up tit-bits. I sat with my hands and arms on the table in such a way as to force her climb over them. She was quite happy doing that as long as I didn't move.

I still hadn't picked her up and if she thought I was going to she headed back to the cage. I was obviously going to have to take her by surprise. Protected by a pair of leather gardening gloves I tried blocking her path back to the cage. I let her bite me and then left her alone to calm down. Within a couple of days she stopped biting and simply ran across my hand. Then I surprised her. I closed my hand and scooped her up. She wriggled but actually seemed quite content, possibly because she could see no means of escape.

(Continued on page 13)

Happenings Past and Future

Lian Vince – Events Co-Ordinator

Eltham Show 12th February 2005

I would like to thank the NFRS for allowing the ERC to hold an agility event at this show, also a big thank you to Lisa for finding a new venue at such short notice, due to the usual venue cancelling at the last minute.

The agility results were as follows:

Adult Owned Doe

- 1st Emma Williamson & Nyx
- 2nd Lian Vince & Gladice
- 3rd Nick Lockett & Brush
- 4th Lian Vince & Wendy
- 5th Mark Sutton & Squeak

Adult Owned Buck

- 1st Lian Vince & Frog
- 2nd Lian Vince & Swamp Monster

Juvenile Owned Buck

- 1st Adam Sutton & Sniffles
- 2nd Adam Sutton & Rooney
- 3rd Becca Williams & Zippy
- 4th Maria Granger and Patch
- 5th Adam Sutton & Renaldo

Juvenile Owned Doe

- 1st Holly Storey-Smith & Ashley
- 2nd Holly Storey-Smith & Mischief
- 3rd Robin Gardner & Orley
- 4th Holly Storey-Smith & Midnight

Special Awards

No Go Award – Joanna Pierre & Mary

Fastest Time of Day – Holly Storey-Smith & Ashley

Best Dumbo – Robin Gardner & Orley

Stop & Wash Award – Maria Granger & Patch

Lack of Secret Weapon Award – Joanna Pierre (Don't worry Jo, one day you might find that 'secret weapon').



ERC 'Social' 20th February 2005

I would like to thank the Mark and his family for opening up their house for this ERC 'social'. As usual there was a guess the name of the rat competition with Christine (Mark's wife) winning the box of chocolates, the rats name is Alice. Also thank you to

Christine for the impromptu 'find Mark in the photo competition' which was won by myself and Jim Graham. As usual Paula went home with a new furry friend, Frosty, who I'm sure will be making future outings to socials. Jim also went home with an additional friend for his two, Trouble and Squeak although the name of his new girl is still to be decided. It was good to see Hershey, or rather the slim line version, well done Emma for keeping him to his diet, and I'm sure we would all like to wish Emma all the best for the future as she is to be married on the 26th February.

The agility results were as follows:

Adult Owned Doe

- 1st Michelle Boyd & Nourishing
- 2nd Paula Hunter & Chi Chi
- 3rd Lian Vince & Tinsel
- 4th Lian Vince & Gladice
- 5th Paula Hunter & Mia

Adult Owned Buck

- 1st Paula Hunter & Roots
- 2nd Lian Vince & Swamp Monster
- 3rd Michelle Boyd & Dangerous Beans
- 4th Lian Vince & Frog
- 5th Emma Randall & Fudge

Juvenile Owned Buck

- 1st Adam Sutton & Rooney

2nd Adam Sutton & Saveloy

3rd Adam Sutton & Renaldo

Special Awards

Squeak Award – Adam Sutton & Saveloy

Trained at Home Award – Nadine St.Claire & Ozzy

Slimmer's Award – Emma Randall & Hershey

I want a cuddle Award – Michelle Boyd & Ham n Pork

Flappy Ears Award – Michelle Boyd & Ebony

I like the last jump award – Nick Lockett & Raisa

No Go Award – Jim Graham & Squeak



13th March 2005 – Diss

Thanks once again to the NFRS for allowing us to hold an agility event at their Diss show. Well done to Zara Williams for winning Best in show and to Michelle Boyd for winning Best Pet. And thank you to all of you that came along and took part in the agility. Just a little reminder – if you do not have a current membership when you take part in the agility, points will not be awarded towards the agility points cups which are awarded in August.

Adult Owned Doe

1st Nick Lockett & Brush, This was the fastest clear round ever recorded at an ERC agility event – I think the see-saw will have to make a come back! Time of 25 seconds.

2nd Lian Vince & Gladice

3rd Michelle Boyd & Cheerio

4th Paula Hunter & Mia

5th Paula Hunter & Frosty

Adult Owned Buck

1st Michelle Boyd & Ham ‘n’ Pork

2nd Paula Hunter & Roots

3rd Lian Vince & Frog

4th Michelle Boyd & Dangerous Beans

5th Lian Vince & Swamp Monster

Juvenile Owned Buck

1st Adam Sutton & Rooney

2nd Adam Sutton & Renaldo

3rd Adam Sutton & Sniffles

4th Beverley Goodchild & Guinness

5th Beverley Goodchild & Pint

Juvenile Owned Doe

1st Nathan Goulder & Gladice

2nd Sarah Giles & Moonlight

3rd Zara Williams & Whippy

4th Melissa Ilston & Sasha

5th Melissa Ilston & Honey

Special Awards

Fastest clear round – Nick Lockett & Brush

Squeak Award – Zara Williams & Whippy

Good Style Award – Jim Graham & Womble

I’ve Borrowed a Rat award – Melanie Goulder & Gladice

Likes the first Jump award – Beverley Goodchild & Guinness.



Diss 2005 (photos Michelle Boyd)

Future Agility

Spring Cup Show, South Darent (Dartford), Saturday 23rd April;

Colchester, Saturday 21st May;

Tendring, Saturday 9th July;

The NFRS is holding a variety show on Saturday 3rd September & a Pet/fun day on Sunday 4th September. Details of how to 'get there' and further show info can be found on the NFRS website www.nfrs.org/shows.

The ERC has been invited to hold an agility event on the Sunday. Classes will be Adult Owned Buck, Adult Owned Doe, and Juvenile Owned Buck & Juvenile Owned Doe with member's who are placed obtaining points counting towards the annual points cups. There will be the usual placing rosettes and several special awards for those outstanding agility feats or rather the lack of them!!!!.

We have also been invited to demonstrate our rats' agility at the Sussex Game & Country Fair at Parham Park near Storrington in West Sussex on Sunday 12th June.

I look forward to seeing you all at these events.

Lian

Future Shows

Jim Graham has located a reasonably priced venue in Colchester so, if it offers the right facilities, we should be able to hold another show later in the year. Lisa Grove and Mark Sutton have offered to judge varieties and pets respectively.

Future Socials

Unless anyone would like to squeeze one in earlier, the next social will be held on 14th August in Great Totham. The event will be a combined with the AGM. With the amount of business (and pleasure) to be conducted we should plan for a slightly longer day - possibly with a more rigid start time. More details will appear in the next newsletter and with the AGM calling notice.

Snowy (Continued from page 9)

I repeated this procedure regularly, abandoning the gloves and taking her further away from her cage.

Now that I felt in control, I decided to introduce her to Sweep and Raisa. They made a great fuss of her and she behaved perfectly. Three days later they were all in the same cage. She wasn't so happy with the adult rats and ran away: she still does.

Snowy (who, incidentally, is not white but Champagne) is still very nervous: I attribute this to poor eyesight. She is no trouble and I'm pleased I was able to help her. She isn't quite the perfect pet because she's not keen on being handled. However she doesn't bite any more: she just scrabbles until you let her go.

Logo Competition

We are still looking for a new club logo. A few people have come up with suggestions which can be viewed on the Yahoo e-group but it would be good to have some more.

Don't be deterred if you can't draw. If you have a good idea, send in a written description: we may be able to find a talented person to create the graphic.

Once we have our logo we can think about issuing membership cards and possibly getting some badges made.

Please send any suggestions to editor@estuaryratclub.org.uk, post them on the e-group or send by ordinary mail to the editor if you don't have internet access.

The complete collection will be included in the July newsletter



Recipe Corner

Amongst all the good food to be had at Mark's social were some fruit and chocolate confections called Florentines which Nadine made and brought along. A number of people asked for the recipe so here it is (thank you Nadine for divulging your secrets).

Florentines

(makes approximately 16)

Ingredients

70g (2½ oz) butter
50g (2 oz) caster sugar
50g (2 oz) plain flour
2 tsp honey
40g (1½ oz) chopped mixed peel
50g (2 oz) glacé cherries,
chopped
50g (2 oz) raisins
40g (1½ oz) flaked almonds
75g (3 oz) milk chocolate
75g (3 oz) white chocolate
75g (3 oz) dark chocolate

Method

1. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4
Place butter and sugar in a saucepan and heat gently until melted.
2. Stir in the next six ingredients. Leave to cool.
3. Cover a baking sheet with non-stick baking parchment. Place teaspoon sized amounts of mixture well spaced on the parchment.
4. Bake for 10 minutes until golden. Cool slightly, then transfer to a wire cooking rack.
5. Melt the milk, white and dark chocolates separately in a bowl over hot water.
6. Spread the back of each Florentine with the chocolate and, using a fork, make swirl patterns. Leave until set.

Nadine adds that she has successfully made 25 extra-large Florentines by using double the quantities.

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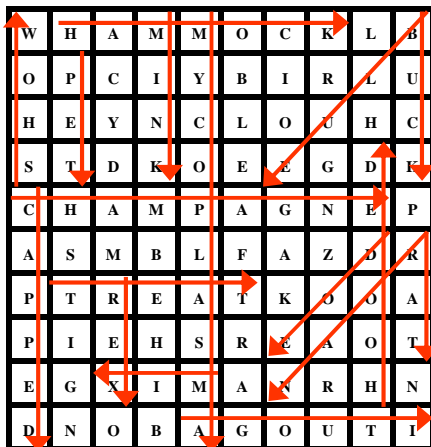
Caption This

Can you provide an amusing caption to this picture of Paula's border terrier, Tia, and her baby Essex, Bobby? Please send suggestions to Paula (Hunter). There are no prizes but Paula's favourite will be published in the next issue.



Christmas Word Search

The solution is shown below. There were supposed to be 18 words but the Christmas elves removed the word 'Pearl' sometime between the draft and final copies (well, I can't blame the spelling checker).



Articles required for the Summer issue of the Newsletter

Letters
Stories
Pictures
Questions

Send to Nick
e-mail
editor@estuaryratclub.org.uk
Mail
18 Seagers, Great Totham,
Maldon, Essex CM9 8PB

