



Rod and Carol's  
"Saffron" from S.Aust.

# Wh-e-mail

## The Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of Victoria Inc.

### Recent Events

**July 19th Lunch on our own.** An enthusiastic group met for yum cha at the Oriental Tea House in South Yarra. Both the food and the company were great, but I found myself sometimes glancing out the window, expecting to see a row of smiling wheaten sitting on the footpath. I don't think I was the only one who missed them a little!

**September 6th Play session at Kepala.** Seven wheaten, aged between 6 months and 7 and three quarter years, played chasey in a grassed run, played at agility activities in the agility run and played around in the sand run. They dug some holes, jumped over each other, flicked sand around, played hidey (being a similar colour to the sand) and monitored the

comings and goings outside the fence - as wheaten do! We all agreed it was too cool for us to be fishing wet wheaten out of the pond, or to be greeted by a sopping wet wheaten, so we will save that for next time. Participants were: Marilyn, Keith & Buddy, Phyllis & Derry, Sarah & Shaemus & Nellie & Geisha, Jane & Murphy, Julie & Max.

### Toys to entertain wheaten:

Tried and tested: Adult people, children, mature dogs and pups, socks and undies stolen from the washing basket, piles of Christmas wrapping paper, meaty bones from youngish animals, balls of various sizes, soft toys from the op shop (remove the eyes or small attached bits - or someone else will!) garden handtools, piles of fallen leaves, snow, a patch of soft grass (for doing whirls, somersaults, dances, skids and rolls), a buster cube filled with treats, dry food treasure hunts, stuffed or unstuffed kongs (Start with the red ones, but you'll soon need the strongest - the black ones), a children's wading pool (with or without apples for dunking, leaves for chasing, or floating toys), an empty PET bottle with the lid on, for hot days freeze small amounts of food in icecream containers of water (remember flavoured ice blocks with bits of banana inside?)

From experience, I don't recommend: feather filled cushions, a torch beam shone in a narrow, dark hall, a box of tissues, or a territorial possum. We've had some problems with full waterbowls being used as toys. I also have a pair of shoes that I can date by the puppy teeth marks. I wouldn't recommend this either!

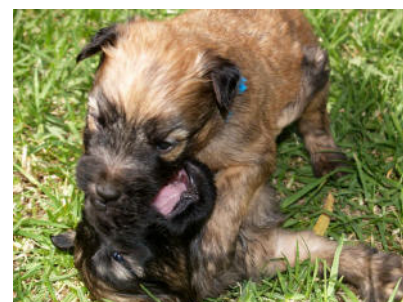
This is not an exhaustive list. I'm happy to include an update with your suggestions and experiences in the next edition.



I didn't do nuthin'. It was THAT pup!



'Free entertainment in the park!'



He ain't heavy. He's my brother.

### Useful contacts:

Secretary - Phyllis: vicdotwheatenatgmaildotcom

Membership enquiries - Julie: positivepawsatbigponddotcom

<http://www.wheatensaustralasia.org/vic>

General information - Committee: vicdotwheatenatgmaildotcom

## Allergies in Wheatens

The club recently had an enquiry about allergic reactions in wheatens. While the breed is not particularly prone to allergies, individual dogs may have problems. I asked the management committee members for ideas, as between us, we have more than 100 years of experience owning wheatens! With the proviso that we are not vets, here goes:

### **Medications:**

Antibiotics (in the case of bacterial infections) or corticosteroids are usually effective in clearing the symptoms, but are not able to deal with the underlying or related cause(s). Chronic skin problems are often multifactorial. Even small changes in the dog's environment, diet, grooming, stress levels etc. may contribute towards an improvement in the skin problem, so it's worth doing a number of minor things.

In cases of severe or chronic allergic reactions, we think it is important to get a good diagnosis. I would suggest that means a referral to a veterinary dermatologist. Using a specialist has the same advantages as using a medical specialist. You are buying a significant increase in training, knowledge and experience of the issue, compared to a general practitioner. In the case of veterinary dermatology, you also usually get a more holistic treatment.

It is important for owners to have confidence in their vet, and to be able to work with them, because skin problems usually involve joint vet/owner action over an extended time. An observant owner is a great help in achieving a diagnosis. Keep a record of your observations of your dog and make notes about the environment, diet, exercise etc. and what you remember about the signs, cycle, severity, duration etc of previous outbreaks.

### **Environmental issues:**

In your garden, neighbours' gardens, or on walks, plants that produce 'windborne' pollens are a problem for sensitive individuals - rye grass and the flowers from privet are bad in spring and summer. The best option is to avoid exposure at times when they are at their worst.

Many plants may cause allergic reactions on contact - all members of the Commelinaceae family are a problem, with Wandering Jew being absolutely notorious. Grevilleas of all varieties may also cause reactions. As for grasses, "Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) and carpet grass (*Axonopus* spp) are implicated. Many clients mistake carpet grass for Buffalo grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*). Buffalo grass is sterile and so far not implicated in dog allergies." From <http://www.dermcare.com.au/pdf/current.pdf>

My experience of Buffalo grass has been that the combination of grass clippings and dead runners form a dense mat underneath. This creates an ideal breeding ground for fleas, fungus, moulds etc. If a dog develops an allergy to flea bites, they only require a single bite to set off a full allergic reaction. It's the flea saliva that's the problem, not the presence or absence of any flea on the dog.

Other environmental factors which may trigger a reaction on contact include: dust mites, wool, certain plastics, leather collars, nickel in collars and chains, shampoos and lotions, etc. etc. Some dogs have reactions to plastic or rubber toys. It may be worthwhile putting these away for a while and providing bones, cotton 'rag dolls' or other natural fibre alternatives, to assess the effect.

I'd look at the dog's sleeping arrangements and aim to reduce exposure to dust mites. If you're not sure about the effect of some items, try temporary measures eg. with the cover on bedding, rather than replace it, try washing it in Softly, Velvet soap or similar, put it back on, then wrap several layers of an old cotton sheet around it. This allows you to try something out and then 'undo' an action to test its effect. Rather than use plastic feed/water bowls, I use stainless steel, glass, or china. The food bowl is a pyrex pie plate bought cheaply at the supermarket.

Some vets recommend frequent bathing with medicated shampoos to treat skin conditions. Others suggest avoid bathing at all, or use only water. Like gardens that are given a lot of watering, I've seen more problems develop because of over bathing than I have with under bathing. It would be best to talk to your vet about how frequently to bath a wheaten with allergies.

We would recommend that you only use Aloveen or a similar low irritant, non drying shampoo and rinse very well. I'd use a chamois or microfibre cloth to partially dry the dog, rather than a blow dryer, and then use a little Aloveen oatmeal intensive conditioner. This can either be left on or rinsed off. You can rub a very small amount of this in at any time, to use as a skin conditioner. We'd suggest avoiding other creams and lotions which tend to have perfumes and preservatives and dry out the skin and coat. If there is a fungal infection (Wheatens sometimes get it around the muzzle because of their beards) "Malaseb" wash is very good, if a bit harsh on the coat over time. Try to leave the foam on the problem area for at least 5 or 10 minutes before rinsing off. The easiest way to do this may be to walk the dog around to distract it.

Generally, the location and appearance of any rash or skin eruption will indicate whether a contact allergy is involved, so detailed notes and even photos are helpful in the diagnosis. The worst case I have seen was a West Highland White Terrier. (They are usually well known at the vets because of their skin conditions.) His owner made him several full body suits out of t-shirt material and he wore them all spring and summer to protect him from contact with the grass. It did work - but he was an extreme case!

Stress can act as a trigger. Is there a cat or possum that has invaded the dog's territory, or a barking dog in the neighbourhood? Wheatens are often sensitive to the feelings of others. My dog gets upset when a neighbour's baby is crying and was quite distressed by another neighbour's new pup that whined and howled when they were away. Is the wheaten with allergies a highly strung, fidgety dog? Is there a stress - scratch cycle?

### **Finally, FOOD:**

Specific food allergies seem not to be as common as many people think. However, improving nutrition can have a very positive impact on the health and well being of any animal. Our experience is that it is best to avoid almost all grains. Many commercial foods, dry, tinned, or semi-moist, contain large amounts of wheat, corn or sugar beet as fillers. These ingredients tend to have poor nutritional value and may exacerbate digestive problems. Rice is perhaps an exception, and is usually well tolerated.

My pet supplies store tell me that the favourite dry food of their breeder/showing/trials customers is Artemis. Many of our club members use it and rate it highly. For others (me included), we'd avoid dry food. We'd probably prefer fresh and raw with an oil supplement. One member writes "I have had wheatens with reaction hot spots from red meat, so try using quality pet chicken mince with vegetables, yoghurt and maybe very well cooked rice (1 cup rice, 2 cups water). Add some good quality oil (omega, flax or similar) and some chicken necks or a carcass for another meal. I have recently found Dr Bruce's Vets All Natural Skin Formula good." We'd also put a wheaten with a bacterial infection on a course of powdered probiotics as soon as the antibiotics are finished. The aim is to provide a diet with the best quality nutrition that you can.

In an attempt to avoid allergy triggers and perhaps gain some control over symptoms, an elimination diet is often recommended for chronic skin conditions. The process involves using a single source of protein, preferably one that the dog has not previously been exposed to (maybe turkey, or kangaroo?) and excluding common food allergens such as dairy products, wheat, beef, corn, tomatoes, nuts and mushrooms. It may either be homemade or a veterinary low allergy diet. The single protein source should be fed for at least 6 weeks. Once symptoms have resolved, one new protein source can be added each week and the effects monitored.

I would suggest anyone with a wheaten with severe allergic reactions should get their hands on a copy of Dr Barbara Fougere's book. She is a Sydney vet with an international reputation for the use of complementary, natural therapies. The book has detailed, practical info on many physical and behavioural canine issues. *Healthy Dogs - A Handbook of Natural Therapies* by Dr Barbara Fougere, Hyland House, Flemington Victoria, 2003. ISBN 1 86447 056 9. It can be bought from several sources on-line for \$29.00 AUD plus postage & handling. You may also be able to get it at one of the larger bookshops, or borrow it from some libraries. Also, here is a very good, clear article:

[http://pet-diseases.suite101.com/article.cfm/diagnosing\\_skin\\_allergies\\_in\\_dogs](http://pet-diseases.suite101.com/article.cfm/diagnosing_skin_allergies_in_dogs)

Information prepared by Phyllis and Committee members of The SCWT Club of Victoria Inc.

## Reminder:

We are in the process of organizing the 2008/2009 Annual General Meeting. This means Membership subscriptions for 2009/2010 are now due - \$10.00 for individual membership or \$15.00 for dual/family membership. Payments may be made by direct deposit, on-line, or over the counter at any Westpac Branch to The Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of Victoria Inc. Email the Secretary for direct deposit or postal details.

**Being entertained by wheatens is the most fun you can have for \$10.00!**

### Calendar of Events 2009 (From September to December 31st)

Date	Activity/Event	Location	Time
Friday September 18	SCWTs at The Royal Melbourne Show email vicdotwheatenatgmaildotcom for further information	Showgrounds [Ascot Vale]	11.30 am
Thursday(?) (date to be confirmed)	Walk our Wheatens Longer walk Contact: email the club	Probably Scotchmans Creek Trail (Venue to be confirmed)	
<b>Sunday October 11</b>	<b>10th Annual Wheaten Picnic Walk, afternoon tea, agility, games, grooming activities Contact: email the club</b>	<b>Fairview Park, Hawthorn Melway Ref 45 B12</b>	<b>2.30pm</b>
Sunday Nov. (date to be confirmed)	Beach Walk 'Narrows Beach' between Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff Contact: email the club	Car Park off Bellarine Highway, opposite Roddick Grove. Melway Ref 500 C2	2.00 pm
(date to be confirmed)	Annual General Meeting Contact: email the club	(Venue to be confirmed)	
Sunday December 13	Big Day Out for Dogs Contact: email the club	K.C.C. Park [655 Westernport Highway, Skye. Melway Ref 128 J12]	From 10.30am
Various Weekdays	Available on some weekdays? Bring your dog for an informal play session or quiet walk. Organised frequently, arranged at 3 or 4 days notice. Contact: email the club	Variety of dog friendly venues around Melbourne's inner and middle suburbs.	Various

Greeting Cards for sale: Produced by the Club. All proceeds to the Wheaten Health Australia Project. The cost is \$20.00 per set plus postage if required. See the full details and request an Order Form on the [Victorian Club webpage](#) or ask a committee member for more information.