



Winter's tails

BY STUART WINTER Follow him on twitter: @birdman or email stuart.winter@express.co.uk

Time for spring clean to keep your pet safe

AS THE clocks go forward and with more outdoor activities on your calendar, it's time to get your cats and dogs treated for some common ailments.

There's a great opportunity to check whether your pet has picked up too many pounds over the winter period and make sure the garden and animal are particularly safe from any nasties.

Did you know, for instance, that simply drinking water from a vase of daffodils can make your animal seriously ill? It's the same with all parts of the plant are poisonous to cats. Licking poison off the fur after brushing against the flower can have a similar effect.

Bluebells are another springtime plant that pose a serious hazard, with flowers, stems, leaves and roots of this toxic country-side plant completely toxic for dogs.

There are also a number of parasites that are also at greater risk of picking up they swollen in recent years and up to three million fleas can live in the home.

New findings from the PDSA Animal Health Report, the biggest annual assessment of pet welfare, show that more than 1.5 million dogs and cats are not getting the necessary treatments to safeguard them from fleas.

The PDSA's head of pet health, welfare, says that a year-round problem thanks to milder winters and warmer homes. Untreated flea infestations can cause chronic animal suffering, so flea prevention is a must for all pet owners.

"Even if your pets don't go outside, flea eggs and larvae can still easily be brought into the home on clothing and shoes. Fleas can lay up to 50,000 eggs a day and can multiply exponentially.



HIDDEN DANGERS: Many British pet owners are unaware of the hazards to cats and dogs

resulting in thousands in under a week. Kittens and puppies are especially susceptible, and fleas can even prove fatal to some animals.

Fleas can thrive in the home, remaining dormant in carpets and soft furnishings as larvae and eggs, until conditions are right, when they can quickly hatch into adult fleas.

"An adult flea can lay 50 to 200 eggs a day, each one with the potential to develop into another flea. This cycle can take as little as 10 days to complete."

Treating your pet against fleas is a decision that should be made after taking a vet's advice. If you have more than one pet, flea treatments should be used on all.

Never use a dog-specific flea treatment on a cat as these can contain higher dosages and could cause fatal poisoning.

Owners can enrol their pets at pestfitch.org.uk. The deadline for entries is Sunday, April 26, 2015.

WHY NOT make this the year you grow your own mint patch? If you have never tried growing your own herbs, now is the time to start. You'll never settle for the bottled stuff again. There is simply no comparison.

For the best results, it's best to start with a small herb pot in a silver dish. Paste the same whatever. Once or twice over the years can be used to make a mint. So stand because mint is so easy to grow. In fact, don't plant it in the open ground because it will take over. Grow it



CHAS'S ROLL ALLOTMENT

The Birdman

Tempt wrens to live in your garden with a good selection of nest boxes

LISTENING for out-of-place birdsong on television always adds an extra dimension to any drama viewing. The geographical and historical context adds to the enjoyment.

Tawny oak hooding in Irish thrillers (there are no lawns there) or collared doves calling in bodice rippers (the first ones did not arrive in Britain until the 18th century).

While most viewers are obsessed with the birdsong, I'm keeping a weathered ear open for bird song in the Cornish melodrama in case we get a repeat of the great Gramercy golden oriole that was the star of the 1970s TV series.

There's an extra reason for the Brit-wren's rarest birds to a recording of one of Britain's rarest birds to the soundtrack, so sparking a frenzy with the soundtrack, so sparking a frenzy with the soundtrack, so sparking a frenzy with the soundtrack.

This brings me to one bird sound that you cannot escape on television at the moment, be it in dramas, news reports or virtual reality shows.

The wren's song is a high-pitched chirp, like a bird so small. Its strident, rattling song begins its size, far exceeding the decibel-to-bodyweight ratios of thrushes and blackbirds.

Wrens are a politician's interview or ringing out in the background of another gardening programme is that it is so frequent that their population is flourishing.

Even if you see the British Tawny's Oriology's territory, there are 7.7 million wren territories held each summer and with a pair of adult birds capable of producing up to three broods a year, the wren is the country's most populous species.

Winter takes its toll. Harsh weather can send numbers plunging and, by spring, if it was not for their fierce song they would go unmissed as they tucked into dense vegetation such as hibernus.

One way to get an up-close view of a wren is by putting up a nest box or, in fact, a handful. Wrens will use a nest box before they build a nest.

You will need a little luck. Male wrens will build several "cock's nests" before the female decides on her favorite and so it may require a full dozen boxes in the garden before getting accepters.

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Visit www.cjwildlife.co.uk to see the birds visit the CJ Wildlife Foods website at biefood.co.uk/ise or you can call 0800 731 2350 for a free catalogue of Garden Wildlife.

Your mouth water when you pinch and smell a leaf of it. To make the sauce, get a small amount of water and a splash of oil. Put on a chopping board and a sprig of salt, pepper and a splash of oil.

Chop up fine. Put it in a dish and just add a splash of oil.

Some amount again of vinegar. Leave it for about an hour and it's ready. Can be frozen for the winter too. You'll never eat the bottled stuff again.

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