Newsletter spring 2021

COVID 19 updates and reliable information can be found at;

Worms and Germs Blog Dr Scott Weese

The centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

World Health Organization

Vetpartners

**Anal Glands and Abscesses**

Anal glands are two sac-like structures found on either side of the rectum. There is a narrow duct to which the gland connects to the anus. They express a distinctive odour, I think of dead fish. (When on your clothing, it stays with you ALL day). These glands are normally expressed when a pet is stressed or ith a bowel movement and contributes to a pet’s territorial marking.

 Occasionally an animal may present with an impacted or infected anal gland. As the pus and pressure builds up in the sac, it can eventually rupture. These abscesses are extremely painful and should be addressed immediately. Some pets with underlying allergies or disease have been know to be predisposed to anal gland problems.

Symptoms reflect the pressure felt by the pet. Scooting along the ground in an attempt to express the glands is common. Animal can present for licking or chewing the rectal area, a reluctance to sit or to poop. The latter can be perceived to be constipation. Painful, a pet may stop eating, become lethargic , or hide or vocalize.

Both dogs and cats have anal glands. (people do not) Treatment of an infected anal gland includes both pain relief, and anti biotics and eventually manual evacuation of the contents

Although these glands are not necessary to maintain a good quality of life, surgical intervention is usually avoided. Pets may benefit from hypoallergenic diets, or even higher fiber diets. Manual expression of the glands may be recommended on a more regular basis. Further diagnostics including bacterial cultures or biopsies may be indicated.

**Diets and heart disease.**

Cats fed all fish diets were found decades ago to develop heart disease. Taurine is an amino acid that cats must consume and are not able to make. As cats are natural carnivores, and animal tissues contain taurine so their natural diets ensured adequate taurine. Feline dilated cardiomyopathy has all but disappeared with pet food manufacturers adding taurine to the diets. Unless a pet owner is feeding a homemade or imbalanced diet, it is now rarely diagnosed.

Dogs, however are able to usually produced taurine, but some breeds appeared to also have dilated cardiomyopathy which resolved with taurine supplementation. Very recently, Golden Retreivers have been found with cardiomyopathy, and an association with grain free diets that use peas or lentils as the base ingredient. Levels of taurine in these dogs was not found to be deficient. Some dogs with food allergies, or gastrointestinal disorders have been put on limited ingredient diets. None of the therapeutic diets including Hills Science Diet or Royal Canin has been associated with these cases.

THERE IS NO MEDICAL OR NUTRITIONAL INDICATION FOR A GRAIN FREE DIET. **Although some veterinary therapeutic diets are in fact grain free, they were not choosen to be so for the treatment of the pet.** Grain free is simply a marketing category and there is not a specific benefit to a pet to be fed one.

Other breeds found to be prone to cardiomyopathy include the American Cocker Spaniel, Newfoundland, and Dalmations.

**Anorexia or loss of appetite**

Without the benefit of discussion we need to monitor our pets for indications of illness. Appetite loss or reduction can be an indication for a veterinary visit. Don’t wait until a pet has stopped eating. Recurrent episodes of changes in appetite or a gradual reduction frequently point to a chronic or progressive illness. Nutritional support aids in a pets recovery and stabilization while diagnostic and treatment recommendations are considered.

Especially with cats, waiting until they are not eating at all can lead to a poorer prognosis. Cats will mobilize their stored fat for nutrients. Mobilizing large amounts of fat into the liver for energy conversion can led to liver disfunction. Obese cats, with larger fat stores are especially at risk to develop fatty liver syndrome.

Options.

1. Try and entice with favourite foods.
2. Offer canned foods, often more palatable, and with the higher water content, aids in hydration.
3. Offer fresh canned food, adding warm water, or warming up the food can increase the aroma and help entice them to eat.

Prescription Diets

If a pet refuses a diet change do not attempt to starve them to force them into eating a new food. This is a common sequalae for pets often historically fed table scraps. Try a gradual change over several weeks, mixing the old with the new diet. Ensure that you contact us if you are having problems with a diet transition. Alternative flavours or diets may be available. Veterinarians have a number of palatable, high caloric contented diets to help support an ill patient. An ill patient can associate the nausea of their illness with a new food. Sometimes permanent diet changes should be postponed and are more successfully carried out when an animal is feeling better.

Medically assisting an ill pet with appetite stimulants can help in recovery. Mirtazapene, originally a human anti depressant was found to increase appetite. Cyproheptadine, an anti histamine similarily has the side effect of increasing a pets appetite. Prednisone is used for many inflammatory or auto immune conditions and has the common side effect of appetite stiumulation. It is generally not used as an appetite stimulant alone as it has effects on many of the body systems.

Assisted Feeding.

An animal that is not eating, will continue to deteriorate and ultimately die. Recovery basics will include adequate nutritional support. Feeding tubes have been placed through the nose, throat or directly into the stomach. Liquid diets can then be delivered to the patient. These tubes often require surgical placement with potential anesthetic risks. Syringe or force feeding can be associated with more stress, and a negative relationship between the pet, owner and food.

MONITOR YOUR PETS WEIGHT and APPETITE and if you see a unexplained downward trend seek medical

**Fleas**

**The majority of the flea lifecycle occurs in the environment, not on the pet.**  Eggs are laid on a pet, and will fall off into the environment. Larvae then hatch, form into a dormant pupae state which can survive for months. The pupae is resistant to both drying and freezing. The entire life cycle can be completed in 3 weeks.

Newer flea products are both safer and more effective. They address both the adults and the environment. Ensure that ALL pets in a household are treated.

 DO NOT USE PERMETHRIN CONTAINING PRODUCTS ON CATS.

see Companion Animal Parasite Council website for more information.

**High Blood Pressure in petsda**

Althoughpets don’t smoke, or stress about the mortgage they can get high blood pressure. High blood pressure results from high blood flow being pushed though a small blood vessel,. Over time, this can lead to bleeding into the surrounding tissue or destruction of blood vessels.

Sudden blindness is a sequelae of the retina becoming detached and can be one of the first recognized signs of high blood pressure. WITH PROMPT TREATMENT FOR HYPERTENSION, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR VISION TO BE RESTORED IN SOME PATIENTS. Do NOT WAIT!!! Hypertension will also make pets more prone to embolisms, tiny blood clots forming and lodging in blood vessels in various locations in the body, including the brain.

Sudden neurologic presentations of a pet may also indicate a stroke or vascular accident, again blood pressure screening should be carried 0ut

High blood pressure in pets is commonly related to kidney or renal disease. Patient screening for high blood pressure is very important. In animals there is usually an underlying disease leading to the high blood pressure. This can include kidney disease, diabetes, cushings disease, glomerular disease ( protein leaked out into urine) , hyperthyroidism, and some tumors.

**87% of cats with high blood pressure were found to have renal disease, hyperthyroidism or both.**

. Blood pressure measurements are performed similarily to humans using an inflatable cuff around a foot, or tail of a pet. As some pets are very nervous at the vets office, these readings can be elevated at the hospital. For this reason a number of readings are taken, acclimatizing the pet to the process.

 As with people, some pets will require medication and monitoring to control hypertesion. Amlodipine is a commonly used calcium channel blocker that effectively dilates or opens up small blood vessels.

Once controlled a patient’s blood pressure should be regularly rechecked every 2-4 months. Note cats with hyperthyroidism, once treated, the high blood pressure resolves.

Heart Murmurs in Dogs and Cats

When listening with a stethoscope, there are normally two distinct sounds. A murmur refers to an extra sound, most commonly heard between them. Often having a “whoshing” sound. The intensity and location of the murmur may be suggestive of the cause, but are usually insufficient to make a diagnosis.

Murmurs are reflective of turbulence in the blood flow. The four chambered heart has blood flow from the right atrium to the right ventricle to the lung, where blood is oxygenated, to the left atrium, then left ventrical and out into the bodies circulation. There are a number of valves that keep the blood flowing in one direction. When these values malfunction the resultant turbulence created leads to a murmur. As pets get older, the heart, a muscle can change shape and these values no longer meet. The most common murmurs in dogs are associated with leaky mitral valves.

Some animals may have congenital heart murmurs that they are born with . Anything that changes the normal blood flow can lead to a murmur. This can include extra blood vessels, holes in the heart or a narrowing (stenosis) of a chamber or blood vessel. Puppies can have innocent or benign murmurs that often resolve by 15 weeks of age.

Changes in the viscosity of the of the blood (as when a patient is anemic, with low red blood cells the cells that normally carry oxygen throughout the body) or when a patient is nervous or excited and the heart pumps faster can also lead to a murmur. We refer to ‘physiologic’ murmurs that are present at a veterinary clinic, but at home resolve. Not unlike people with high blood pressure in a physician’s office.

The cause of murmurs in cats is not usually determined on a physical exam. Cats with hyperthyroid have elevated heart rates which can lead to murmurs, and if left untreated,can develop heart disease. Cats with cardiomyopathy (abnormal heart muscle) may have the intensity of the murmur increase as the diseae progresses.

A congenital murmur refers to a pet that has had a murmur since birth or near it. They are associated with heart abnormalities that they are born with . An aquired murmur refers to one that develops later in life. Although they can be benign, they are often associated with developing heart disease.

The grading of a murmur is a veterinarian’s attempt at describing the loudness of a murmur. It does not necessarily reflect the severity of heart disease. Changes in the intensity of the murmur are suggestive of a potential progression of heart disease. In cats with cardiomyopathy, the grading of the murmur does often reflect the severity of the disease.

Chest xrays may be recommended, or a referral to a specialist for other diagnositcs including ultrasound. I believe that only a board certififed veterinary cardiologist should perform cardiac ultrasounds in pets.

If your pet has a murmur a cardiologist can perform an ultrasound to determine the cause of the murmur. Measurements can help determine the need for supportive medications or diets, the prognosis and future activity.