



ANDOVER
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Around the Barn

Andover Animal Hospital

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Hours

Monday: 8:00am - 8:00pm
Tuesday: 8:00am - 8:00pm
Wednesday: 8:00am - 6:00pm
Thursday: 8:00am - 8:00pm
Friday: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Saturday: 8:00am - 12:00pm
Sunday: Closed

Harvey E. Hummel, VMD
Shelley L. Parker, DVM
Wendy Turner, DVM



Gator recovering

Pica

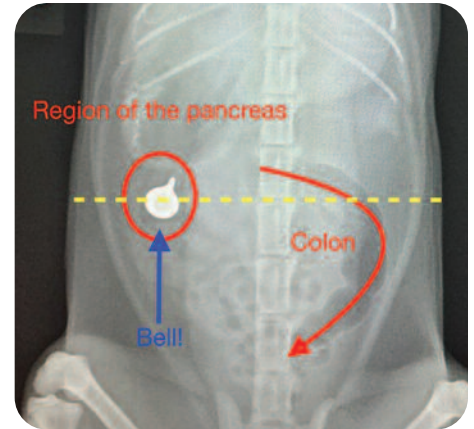
Dogs and cats will eat the craziest things. Unfortunately, it can get them into a lot of trouble, too. For some dogs, nothing is safe. Socks, underwear, rocks, cell phones and empty food wrappers are all fair game. Cats are particularly attracted to rubber bands and string.

Sometimes a pet is simply playing with an item and down it goes. When an animal frequently ingests non-food items (sometimes compulsively), the behavior is called "pica." In these cases it's especially important to talk to your veterinarian to determine if there may be a root medical cause. If it's purely behavioral, the most common reason is boredom.

Once ingested, foreign objects can be deadly. As they pass through the gut, they can cause perforations and infections, and a complete blockage can occur. Dehydration is often a side effect if the animal can't keep enough water down. Some items will pass naturally, but surgical removal is sometimes the only option.

Animals that have swallowed a foreign object may initially appear depressed and lethargic – they just don't feel good. Vomiting and diarrhea may occur, and may be intermittent if the object only caused a partial blockage. If there is a complete blockage, the pet may not be able to keep anything down, and its condition will deteriorate quickly.

Diagnosing a foreign body obstruction can be difficult. Some objects (especially those that are metallic) will show up clearly on x-rays, while other times a particular pattern of gas in the bowel can indicate an obstruction. An option is to feed a substance called barium to the pet. Barium is opaque on x-rays, so will show up clearly as it travels through the gut. For some objects, ultrasound is a better



aid in diagnosis. If the results still are not clear, it becomes necessary to do an exploratory surgery.

At Andover Animal Hospital we often see cases of pica. We have removed objects ranging from dish towels to toys, coins and rocks. Recently we had a case involving a one-year-old cat named Gator. Gator had nonspecific clinical signs of lethargy and vomiting for two days. He also had a decreased appetite and was painful when his abdomen was palpated. Dr. Turner recommended radiographs, and a foreign body was visible.

Gator was placed on intravenous fluids, started on antibiotics and pain medication, and scheduled for surgery. Dr. Hummel performed the surgery and removed the unknown object from his intestine. Gator's recovery was uneventful and he went home two days after his procedure. Prior to the surgery the owner was unsure what Gator had eaten. Once it was removed we all recognized it as a bell from one of Gator's collars. Though Gator will never admit to what really happened, we think he accidentally swallowed the bell while playing with it.

If you believe your dog or cat has ingested a foreign object, seek veterinary attention immediately. The sooner the problem is addressed, the less likely internal damage will occur.



The Urinary System

The urinary system (also known as the renal system) performs several important functions: it removes waste products and toxins from the blood, regulates blood pressure, maintains the body's balance of water and electrolytes, produces some vital hormones and enzymes, and also processes vitamin D.

The urinary system consists of the kidneys, the ureters (the tubes that connect the kidneys to the bladder), the bladder and the urethra (the tube from the bladder through which urine exits the body). The "lower urinary tract" refers to the bladder and the urethra.

There are a number of problems that can occur within the lower urinary tract, including infection or inflammation, stones (uroliths) and crystals, cancer, and incontinence due to a number of factors, such as weakness of the urinary sphincter muscle.

"He taught me to appreciate the simple things – a walk in the woods, a fresh snowfall, a nap in a shaft of winter sunlight."

– John Grogan,
Marley and Me

UTI

If you've ever suffered from a urinary tract infection (UTI), then you're familiar with the burning, painful sensation and the urgency to urinate frequently. Pets can suffer from UTIs as well, and their signs are similar:

- Frequent urination, small amounts
- Straining to urinate
- Painful urination (your pet may whine or cry out)
- Frequent licking of the genital area
- "Accidents," when a normally housetrained dog urinates indoors or a cat goes outside of the litter box
- Blood in the urine (which you may not notice unless there is snow on the ground or your pet urinates indoors)

The most common type of UTI is a bacterial infection of the bladder, known as bacterial cystitis. Infections may also occur in the kidneys, ureters and urethra.

The urinary bladder is normally a sterile environment, meaning no bacteria are typically present. UTIs are often the result of bacteria entering through the urethra and traveling up to the bladder, and for that reason UTIs are more common in females than in males because the urethra is longer in males. Any age or breed of dog or cat can suffer from a UTI. Certain conditions such as diabetes, kidney problems and cancer can put pets at greater risk of UTIs as well.

House soiling is often considered a behavior problem by pet owners who are unaware that their pet may be experiencing a painful infection or other problem in the urinary tract. If you notice the signs of a UTI, it's crucial to take your pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible. In addition to pain and discomfort of an infection, the signs may be indicative of a more complicated problem, such as urinary stones, kidney disease, cancer or feline lower urinary tract disease (in cats).

If your veterinarian determines the cause is a bacterial infection, a culture will help determine what type of bacteria are present and therefore, which antibiotics will be most effective in treating it.



"The vet says I need a hobby. I thought eating and sleeping were my hobbies!"



Sniffing Out UTIs

According to the Centers for Disease Control, urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common infections in people. Older adults, people with mobility impairments, impaired bladder function and those who require urinary catheters are at increased risk. As with pets, UTIs in humans that are treated promptly typically clear up quickly. Left untreated, however, UTIs can lead to complications, including serious kidney infections.

Early detection of UTIs is challenging. It can take up to 48 hours for laboratory cultures to yield results, and that's after people manage to get to the doctor. The issue is more complex for those with spinal cord injuries, as the symptoms associated with a UTI, such as back or abdominal pain, a burning feeling upon urination and urgency to urinate, may not be present at all.

Assistance Dogs of Hawaii, the Pine Street Foundation and the Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children recently embarked on a study to determine whether dogs can be trained to distinguish the odor of urine samples that are positive for bacterial infections (bacteriuria) versus those that are negative.

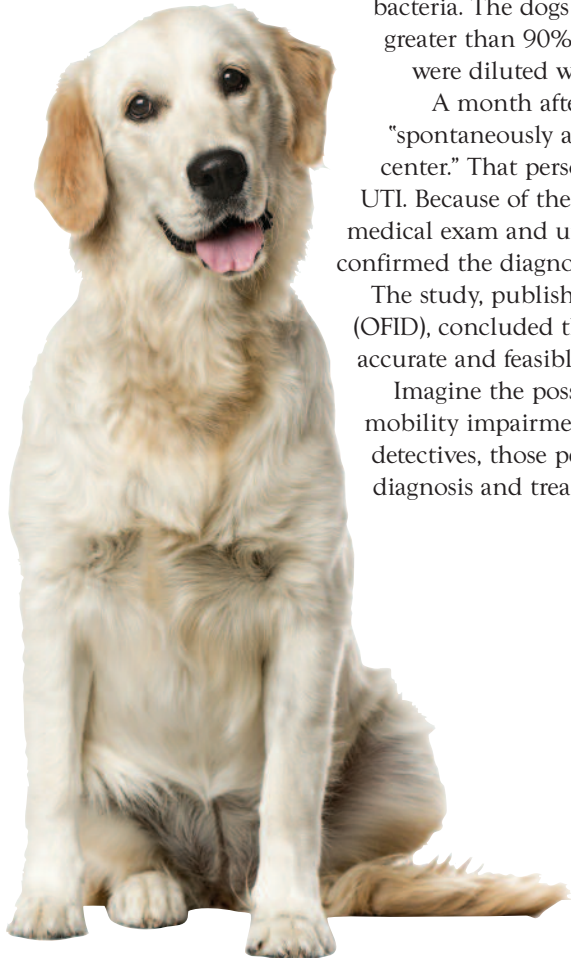
Five dogs with no prior scent training were selected to participate. Training occurred four days per week for eight weeks, using positive training methods (clicker training with food rewards). The dogs were taught to sniff multiple samples and sit in front of a positive sample if one was detected.

Samples from 687 people, from 3 months to 92 years of age, were used in the study. All of the samples had been previously tested by a laboratory. 66% of the samples were known to be bacteria-free, and 34% had cultured positive for bacteria. The dogs alerted to the positive samples with a greater than 90% accuracy rate, even when the samples were diluted with distilled water.

A month after the study, one of the dogs "spontaneously alerted to a person visiting the training center." That person didn't feel well but hadn't suspected a UTI. Because of the dog's alert, that person went for a medical exam and urine culture, and the physician confirmed the diagnosis of a bacterial UTI.

The study, published in *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* (OFID), concluded that "Canine scent detection is an accurate and feasible method for detection of bacteriuria."

Imagine the possibilities! If service dogs for people with mobility impairments could also be trained to be infection detectives, those people would benefit from earlier diagnosis and treatment of potentially dangerous UTIs.



A blocked urethra is a medical emergency, especially in male cats. If your pet is straining to urinate or crying out in pain, seek immediate veterinary care.



Urolithiasis

In humans, the first symptom of urolithiasis—or urinary tract stones—is sometimes sudden, excruciating pain. The condition also occurs in dogs and cats, and in some cases is likely to be just as painful for them.

Minerals in urine can sometimes form crystals. The crystals can then combine to form stones, known as uroliths. Uroliths can form in the kidneys, ureters, bladder or urethra.

Uroliths can rub against the bladder wall, causing it to bleed. They can also cause partial or complete obstructions in the urethra. Obstructions can quickly lead to acute kidney failure, septicemia and a ruptured bladder. A complete obstruction can be fatal, and is a true medical emergency. Obstructions are more common in male pets, who have a longer, narrower urethra.

Signs of uroliths are similar to signs of a urinary tract infection, and may include blood in the urine, straining to urinate and pain upon urination.

There are several different types of stones that can develop; two common types are struvite stones and calcium oxalate stones. The pH of the bladder affects the type of stones which may develop, as some occur in acidic environments while others occur in alkaline conditions.

There is no single cause of urolithiasis. Risk factors include decreased water intake, urinary tract infections, an imbalanced diet and certain medications. Some breeds of dogs are at higher risk. Additional factors include lack of exercise and the inability to urinate frequently, such as dogs who are confined indoors for long periods of time.

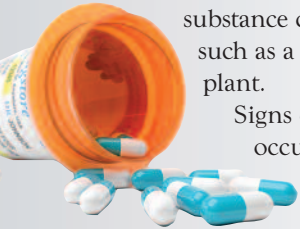
Treatment depends on the type of stones. Prescription diets (designed to change the pH of the bladder) and increased water intake will help resolve the condition in some cases. Other treatments include flushing the urinary tract with water, ultrasonic dissolution (using ultrasound to break up the stones) and surgery to remove the stones.

Toxicity

The phrase "toxic substance" usually brings to mind things like arsenic or battery acid. The truth is, many things are toxic to pets and humans; even items that are safe in low doses can become toxic in higher quantities. The word "toxicity" is

defined as the degree to which a substance can harm an organism, such as a human, animal or plant.

Signs of toxic exposure may occur within minutes or may not present for



hours or even days. Outward signs of toxicity vary depending on the toxin, and can include lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, lethargy, rapid heart rate and seizures. Internal damage often occurs as well, and can range from internal bleeding to liver or kidney damage and death.

1. Human medications – Both prescription (such as blood pressure medications) and non-prescription (such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen) human drugs can be highly toxic to pets.

2. Human food – Xylitol is a low-calorie, natural sweetener found in



many foods and just a small amount can cause hypoglycemia, seizures and liver failure in dogs. Pets can't process the stimulants in chocolate and coffee as well as humans, and just one ounce of milk chocolate per pound of body weight is a potentially lethal dose for dogs. Other toxic foods include raisins and grapes, onions, garlic, raw yeast bread dough, macadamia nuts and coffee.


3. Marijuana and alcohol – There have been a growing number of reports of dogs being admitted to



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TOXICITY *continued from pg. 4*

veterinary emergency rooms after ingesting marijuana.

4. Household and garage items –

Laundry and dishwasher packets pose a threat to pets and children. Antifreeze has an appealing taste and smell, and it is deadly to pets.

5. Insecticides – Products used around the home and yard can easily be walked on by pets, then ingested when they clean their paws. Some flea and tick products designed for dogs

are highly toxic to cats.

6. Rodenticides – Many people put rat poison around their garage, cellar or attic. Use caution, as it is deadly to cats and dogs.

7. Veterinary medications and products – Many pet medications are intentionally flavored to make them easier to give to your pets, but that increases the potential of a toxic overdose if your pet gains access to the container.

8. Plants – Some indoor and outdoor plants, such as lilies, can be toxic to pets.

9. Lawn and garden products –

Cocoa mulch, blood meal, fertilizers and pesticides can all be toxic.

You can learn more about plants, foods and other substances that are toxic to pets on the ASPCA website, www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animalpoison-control.

If you suspect that your pet may have ingested or come in contact with something toxic, don't hesitate to call us, because minutes count. You can also call the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at **(888) 426-4435** (there is a charge for this call).

