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Veterinary newsletter

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While urinary tract disorders are fairly common in cats, urinary tract infections (UTIs) are fairly uncommon. Cats with UTIs try to urinate very frequently, they may pass only small amounts of urine, they may strain to urinate, they may cry out or whine when urinating, and there may be blood visible in their urine. Urinating outside of the litterbox is also a red flag that something is wrong in the bladder. Finally, frequent licking around the rear end may signal that a UTI is present.

Generally, a UTI occurs when bacteria travel up the urethra and into the bladder. Urine in the bladder is supposed to be sterile, but once bacteria find their way to the bladder, the bacteria can grow and reproduce, causing the UTI. Some cats will develop bladder stones, with or without a UTI, and this opens the door for additional health issues.

What does a urinalysis look at?

If your cat presents to your veterinarian with urinary signs, your veterinarian will first perform a urinalysis. The urinalysis can reveal so much important information about the urine when a UTI is suspected. Your veterinarian will look for the following:

- urine-specific gravity (how well the cat is concentrating their urine)
- pH (certain pH levels can indicate infection or other problems)
- ketones (sometimes seen in cases of diabetes or body-wasting)
- glucose (sugar in the urine, usually a sign of diabetes)
- bilirubin (a breakdown product of blood)
- blood
- protein



Once these levels are measured, the urine specimen is placed into a centrifuge and spun down to allow cells and other debris to accumulate at the bottom of the sample tube. That debris can then be evaluated, revealing the presence of red blood cells, white blood cells, bacteria, and crystals.

Often, a veterinarian will prescribe an antibiotic that is among the most commonly used for treating UTIs in order to try to provide immediate relief to the cat. They may also prescribe pain medications (UTIs can be uncomfortable), and may recommend a diet change. Once the culture and sensitivity results are received, an appropriate antibiotic will be prescribed. After the course of antibiotics is given, it is important to recheck the urinalysis to confirm that the infection is resolved. If it is not, then it will be important to look for other issues that may contribute to a persistent UTI. Older female cats, and cats with diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes), develop UTIs more commonly than the general population. Cats who have bladder stones are prone to recurrent UTIs, pointing out the importance of getting a complete diagnosis whenever there are signs of disease in the urinary tract. Bladder stones must be removed or dissolved in order to restore bladder health.

We will let you know if there is anything that can be done to prevent your cat's UTI from coming back. There is evidence that specific diets can support lower urinary tract health. It is best to discuss UTI prevention and bladder health with us in order to put into action an effective plan.

Article from Malcolm Weir, DVM, MSc, MPH; Robin Downing, DVM, DAAPM, DACVSMR, CVPP, CRPP

Arthritis in working dogs

Around this time of year, we begin seeing working dogs 'slow up'. Common causes for early retirement of working dogs are cited as "slowing down, getting old, unable to jump on the back of the truck anymore..."

These behaviours of "slowing down" can be a sign of your dog being in pain and discomfort. Dogs with chronic pain may not show obvious signs. They will not cry or whimper, especially when they know there is a job to be done, such as shifting a mob of sheep. They express their pain in subtle ways such as behaviour changes or shifting weight off the affected limb/limbs. Working dogs are an important asset, so we need to think about what we can be doing from pup through to senior years so that they can work to their full potential effectively and comfortably.



Your dogs work very hard all year round, you rely on them in your day-to-day work to perform at their best. What are some easy ways to make a difference to your dogs to reduce the impact of arthritis?

Housing

Provide kennels that are draught-free, sheltered from the direct sun, wind, and rain. The kennel box should always have a layer of bedding to remove pressure off joints – in winter provide an additional layer to provide additional warmth. A thrifty tip is to add some old carpet on the walls and floor of the box where they sleep in order to reduce draughts and provide insulation.

We are so pleased to see the growth in working dogs being coated at night – dog jackets can be picked up for as little as \$30 from some places. Dogs often begin to line up to have them put on after a couple of nights!

Nutrition

Premium nutrition provides the nutrients and energy a dog needs to perform and recover after work. Poor quality diets can lead to low energy levels, delayed recovery from injury and slow healing of wounds; they can also affect coat quality, and can contribute to constipation, obstruction and GDV (stomach twist). Hills Science Diet and Royal Canin offer tailored diets for working dogs, and usually require less food to be fed than cheaper brands.



Joint care For your older dogs or those recovering from orthopaedic surgery, you should consider putting them onto a specific joint diet or joint supplement, such as Antinol, 4CYTE™, SynoquinEFA and/or Synovan. Discuss with your veterinarian or veterinary nurse which option would suit your dog.

Ear Infections

We have seen a lot of ear infections recently. There are a number of factors which can cause infection. Dogs with ongoing ear issues usually have underlying skin problems and dogs that suffer from allergies are predisposed to ear infections. Scratching, rubbing at the ear and head shaking are all common signs. You may also notice redness and swelling or an abnormal odour. Most ear infections in adults are caused by yeast and bacteria. Ear mites and foreign bodies (like grass seeds) are also a common cause, especially in puppies.

Some ear infections are not preventable but care and grooming can help in the hot and humid months.

Keep the opening of the ear canal free of matted hair by clipping the fur around the outside of the ear and gently removing any matts. Do not forcibly pluck the ear as this causes inflammation which can lead to infection.

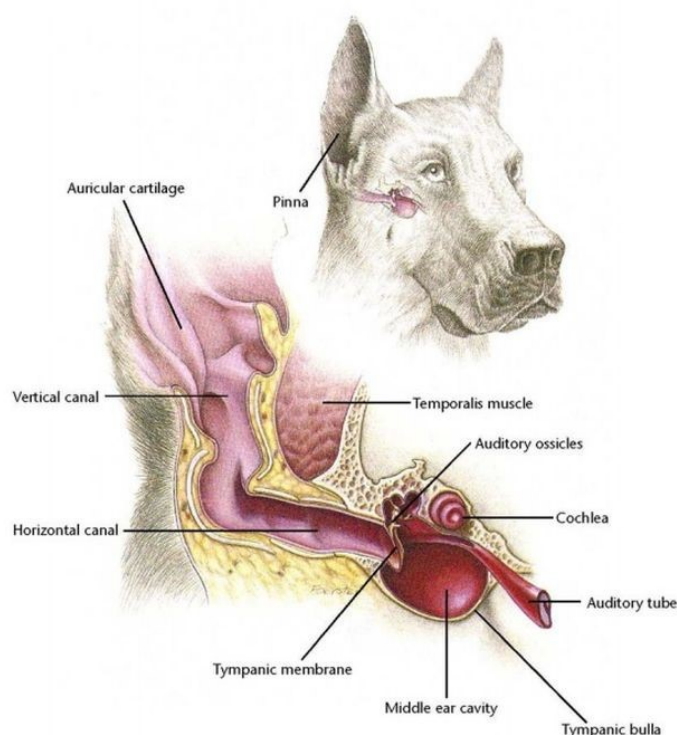


Clean waxy ears every 2-4 weeks. Use an ear cleaner that dissolves wax and dries up the ear (Epi Otic.) These drops are designed to loosen the debris inside the ear so it can be dislodged when the dog shakes its head. Fill the ear with cleaner and gently massage for one minute. Wipe any debris from the outside of the ear with cotton wool.

If the ear is red, swollen, or sore to touch, contact one of our vets for an examination before proceeding any further. Chronic ear problems can be difficult

to manage and dogs with persistently bad ears often need to be examined and have their ears flushed while anaesthetised.

Occasionally surgery is needed to fix ongoing ear issues and a referral to a specialist veterinary dermatologist may help underlying allergies.



Enzootic pneumonia in Sheep

Pneumonia in sheep is a complex disease involving different bacteria and viruses and can cause acute and chronic infections. Sheep of all ages can be affected but mainly affects lambs and hoggets. The signs we see in acute cases are animals may just be found dead but most commonly seen as coughing in the mob particularly when driven. We may also see nasal discharge, lagging behind and breathing difficulty. Some animals become chronically affected and will be slow to grow.

What makes you animals more susceptible to pneumonia?

Pneumonia is often related to stress during mustering and yarding, especially in dry and dusty conditions; heat stress and transport

Economic effects

- Direct losses of stock
- Prolonged sporadic losses
- Reduced weight gain, up to 50% lower than unaffected lambs, and reduced wool production
- Rejection and downgrading of carcasses in stock sent for slaughter due to pleurisy

How do I know if my flock is affected?

The clinical signs as listed above that are shown by affected animals; also post mortem findings in sheep found dead or unthrifty animals, and slaughter reports give you an indication of the status of your flock.

Treatment

Treatment of individual sheep is generally not curative. The most important way of reducing losses is the prevention of pneumonia.

Prevention of pneumonia

- Avoid stress as much as possible
- Avoid yarding and close confinement under hot and dusty conditions
- Muster early in the morning
- Try to minimize droving distances
- Use sprinkler systems in the yards to dampen down the dust
- Use of portable yards to shorten times of droving
- Control dogs when not at work so they don't disturb sheep unnecessarily
- Maintaining good stock health during risk periods (drenching and good food)



Illthrift lambs are a sign of enzootic pneumonia
