

## The Drooling Cat

It can be as harmless as drooling too much while they are purring with the attention given but it can also indicate a variety of illnesses or causes of concern.

Also referred to as “dribbling, hypersalivation, sialorrhoea or ptyalism”, drooling is the flow of saliva from the mouth. Saliva is constantly being secreted by the salivary glands, its function is to keep the mouth moist and aid digestion. Saliva production is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. Drooling can either be caused by over production of saliva, spillage of saliva from the mouth or difficulty swallowing. Cats generally aren't as prone to drooling as dogs.



There are some harmless causes that may result in drooling such as when they are being petted or about to be fed. This is a sign of excitement and/or pleasure. Cats will often drool when they have consumed catnip. Certain prescription medications can also cause drooling or foaming of the mouth due to the bitter or unpleasant taste.

If drooling is not normal for your cat, and suddenly occurs for reasons other than those listed above, it can be a sign that there is something wrong.

Medical causes of drooling in cats includes:

**Dental problems** - Disorders of the mouth are one of the most common causes of drooling in cats.

**Poisoning** - Antifreeze, snail bait, toxic plants, laundry detergent, household cleaning products, bleach, liquid potpourri, mercury, copper, arsenic, chocolate, glow sticks, mercury. Many of these products are not only toxic but also corrosive, causing ulceration in the mouth and oesophagus.

### **Pancreatitis**

**Certain medications** - Certain antihistamines, metronidazole (Flagyl), sulfa antibiotics.

**Topical flea products** which have been accidentally licked off the coat.

**Foreign object** in mouth such as a stick or bone fragment.

**Mouth ulcers.** Small, painful lesions which may be due to kidney disease, cat flu, pemphigus, ingestion of toxins and thermal burns.

**Upper respiratory infection** (cat flu) - Similar to colds and flu in humans, cat flu is an upper respiratory infection which is caused by a number of viruses or bacteria.

### **Liver disease**

**Oral cancer** - There are more than twenty types of cancer which can develop in the oral cavity of cats

**Chronic renal failure** - Drooling in cats with kidney failure may be due to nausea, reflux or uremia (a build up of toxins which would ordinarily be flushed out via the urine) which can cause mouth ulcers.

### **Nausea**

### **Kitten teething**

Any changes in behaviour and/or new symptoms should be immediately investigated by your veterinarian. They will perform a complete physical examination of your cat, including a thorough examination of the mouth and observing other symptoms which may accompany the drooling. Treatment will depend on the cause of the drooling.

### **When to see a veterinarian**

If your cat appears to be otherwise happy and well with no additional symptoms a wait and see approach may be all that is necessary. If however your cat is still drooling after a day, or if you notice any other symptoms accompanying the drooling, you should see a veterinarian immediately.

## Case of the Month: Sophie struggles to breath

Sophie came in to see us recently as she was having a bit of trouble breathing. Her owner reported that she hadn't eaten her dinner last night which was unusual for her and this morning she didn't seem like her usual self. She had also been coughing in an unusual way, this cough did not seem to be getting any better and was not producing anything. On clinical exam Sophie had an increased temperature and heart rate, her lungs seemed to sound ok and there was no sign of pain in her tummy. She did appear to be slightly dehydrated and because of this she was admitted in to the hospital to be put on fluids and have a blood test. As she was also having trouble breathing it was decided that she would need an x-ray also. The x-ray showed that Sophie had a build up of gas around her left lung which was reducing her lungs ability to inflate and therefore breath, this explained the funny cough and the laboured breathing.

We needed to get this gas off of Sophie's lungs to allow her to breathe easier. This was done by placing a needle between her ribs (being careful not to stab her lung!!) and using a syringe to draw off the excess gas. As soon as the procedure was done Sophie began to breathe a lot easier. However when we had a second listen to her lungs they sounded "crackly" indicating that she also had a type of pneumonia going on. A second x-ray showed that we had been successful in removing the unwanted gas and confirmed there was a pneumonia present. This pneumonia was assumed to be bacterial in origin because of her increased temperature, her blood test also supported this diagnosis. Sophie was placed on antibiotics and was soon right enough to be sent home. At home she continued to improve and is now back to her old self again and keen to get back into work.

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## Our Pets and Poisons

**Rat bait:** As the weather gets cooler rats and mice begin to make your house their home for the winter. Many people start to lay down rat bait which tastes good to cats and dogs. The problem is that rat bait is not only poisonous to rodents but can be fatal to your pets. If you see your pet eating rat bait call us immediately and bring them down. The sooner we start treatment the better the outcome.

Most rat baits cause bleeding as the body can't produce clots. You may not see the bleeding as it is often in to body cavities. Signs to look out for are coughing or difficulty breathing, a swollen stomach, pale gums, lethargy, blood in faeces/vomit and acutely sore joints. Signs usually occur between 8 to 72 hours after ingestion.

### Handy hints

Bring down the packaging of the bait ingested as different products require treatment for varying amounts of time. This is also helpful for us to select appropriate treatment as not all rat baits cause bleeding. If you see your pet eating dead or sick animals particularly rats and mice they may get poisoned.

**Antifreeze (ethylene glycol):** This toxicity also becomes more apparent as winter approaches. Cats tend to be more commonly affected than dogs but both species can be poisoned. If you see your pet licking up any liquids off the road or the drive which you suspect could be antifreeze call us and bring them straight in. It is also important to clean up any spills as very small amounts can be fatal. Signs can appear as quickly as 30 minutes and tend to be related to kidney failure. You may see your pet drinking and urinating a lot more, they become depressed and not very responsive, may appear wobbly on their feet or unable to walk, have seizures and they can begin to vomit.

This poisoning is very serious and unless caught extremely early will unfortunately almost always lead to death.

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## Did you know.....

- \* Elephants flap their ears to cool themselves. If they are cooling themselves in the water, elephants will use their trunk as a snorkel.
- \* Chimpanzees are omnivores which mean that they eat both plants and animals. They like to eat fruit, insects, eggs and meat.
- \* Pandas have seven time bigger teeth than humans. Big teeth facilitate chewing of bamboo.
- \* Seals have more blood in their body than other animals. Since blood cells keep the oxygen, seals can dive longer than other animals.
- \* Camels are mostly famous for their humps. Most people believe that humps store water, but they actually store fat, which the animal uses as a source of energy when other food sources are not available.
- \* Owls are very successful hunters because they can fly silently. A special kind of soft feathers muffle the sound of the moving wings, allowing the bird to approach the prey unnoticed.

