



Poisonous Substances

Cats and dogs are adventurous animals and occasionally they get in to chemicals. It may seem like a good idea at the time to have a little taste, but often this has disastrous consequences. Some toxins like Monensin (used as bloat prevention in cattle) can cause paralysis and death in dogs. Antifreeze is a known poison to most people and unfortunately animals usually only present at the later stages of toxicity, when it is too late to give them an antidote. Rat bait is also a common cause of toxicity but mostly seen in dogs, and usually they present early enough so that an emetic can be given followed by Vitamin K. Treatment may need to be continued for 4-6 weeks and a blood test taken 3 days after last dose to check that the blood is able to clot normally again. Possum bait poisoning is fortunately seen less often, but will cause severe kidney failure that may be reversible although prolonged and intensive treatment including dialysis is likely to be needed.

It is not just chemical that can poison your precious four legged family member. Some food is harmless to humans but can have serious consequences if fed to a dog or a cat. Most people know that chocolate should not be fed to dogs. The dark chocolate in particular contains higher content of theobromine, the toxic agent responsible for causing heart arrhythmias, tremours and seizures. Raisins and grapes may cause kidney failure and it is not known whether a large amount has to be eaten at once or if the effect is accumulative if small amounts are fed over time. Onions cause anaemia due to damage to the red blood cells. This is the same for raw onion as well as cooked. Something to think about if you feed your pet left over after you've had lasagne or a hearty stew for dinner. Avocado can cause vomiting or diarrhoea. Raw egg whites can cause poor growth, lethargy and skin irritation, macadamia nuts can cause weakness and even paralysis of the back legs.



Other things that may get ingested with harmful effects although not directly poisonous would be chunks of bone, pieces of fabric, plastic or chewed up parts of toys. Recently we had a dog that swallowed the tag off a bread bag and it got stuck in her small intestine and perforated the gut, causing her to feel very poorly with a rather sore abdomen. However after surgery to remove 7cm of damaged intestine, she recovered well and is now taking more care before she swallows anything.

At the end of the day, cats and dogs need to be supervised just as much as a toddler. They are likely to get into mischiefs if they get bored and it is better to keep them entertained with a long walk and plenty of exercise and if left alone provide them with a safe chew toy that gets inspected frequently and replaced if damaged.



How often do I need to bring my pet to see the vet?

Most healthy dogs and cats are only brought to the vets for a vaccination/check-up. Unless they go to kennels or cattery, the vaccination is often only done once every 2 years. A lot can change in 2 years and subtle changes can go unnoticed by the owner but can be picked up during a veterinary consultation. Prevention is usually cheaper than treatment and often the treatment is more effective if started early before the condition has had a chance to get too bad. Possible problems can include kidney disease, liver failure, arthritis, heart failure, diabetes, etc. For this reason, it is still a good idea to bring your pet in at least once a year, even for just a health check.



If your cat or dog is put on long term medication then you will be asked to bring him or her in for a repeat prescription check every 6 months, sometimes every 3 months or more frequently depending on the condition. Each individual case is different, but the minimum is every 6 months. If you were on chronic medication you would have to see your GP for regular check-ups too and animals age faster than humans. For your convenience check-ups can be done at the same time as a vaccination and or health check.

Occasionally medication check-ups will include a blood test to check how things are progressing. This can keep an eye on whether the kidneys or liver are getting worse in case of disease. Or it may be to check there are no unwanted side effects caused by the medication. In some cases the blood test may be to check that the medication has got the desired effect, or if the dose will need to be altered in any way.

So you see, there is no definite answer to how often your pet needs to see the vet but rest assured, we are here to help and only want what's best for your furry family member.

Feeding for good health

Feeding a pet is not rocket science, yet there are several food companies that have spent a lot of time in order to scientifically work out what a dog or cat need in the way of nutrition. The bottom line is that if you feed poor quality food, chances are you will need to pick up faeces after them more than if you were feeding a good quality food. You might even find that buying the better quality food, may work out at a similar price per day as you often are feeding less. The reason for this is that good quality food contains a balanced amount of nutrients, vitamins and minerals so that most of it is absorbed and utilised by the body and less is wasted as faeces. Feel free to have a chat with your vet next time you are at the clinic.

While we are on the matter of feeding, is your pet getting a bit heavy? Most pets will eat what is offered and if fed too much will gain weight. If weight gain is ignored, then your pet is in danger of becoming obese and this in turn carries with it several health risks. An overweight dog or cat is at increased risk of heart failure, diabetes and high blood pressure. Excess weight also puts extra strain on joints, leaving your pet at risk of developing arthritis. Never mind the fact that build-up of fat around the ribs can make breathing more difficult as there will eventually be less room for the lungs to expand.

Sometimes food is used as part of treatment for various conditions. There is food to reduce the workload for diseased liver or kidneys, food containing joint supplement, food for delicate constitution, there is even a diet which is low in iodine that can be used as treatment for cats with overactive thyroids. There are also several types of diet food available to help your pet lose weight.

Food used as part treatment for a specific condition is classed as a prescription diet and hence can only be purchased after a consultation with your vet.

So all in all, if you are confused about how to feed your cat or dog, don't hesitate to call in to the clinic for a friendly chat but remember it may still be necessary to book your pet in for a consultation.



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