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*...because animals
matter*

Cat vet questions

Melissa Catt BVSc
Paddington Cat Hospital

Melissa graduated from the University of Sydney in 1990. She worked in a private small animal practice in Adelaide for two years and then in England for a further two years. Melissa continued in private practice on her return to Sydney before starting Paddington Cat Hospital with her husband, Randolph Baral in 1997. Melissa is interested in all aspects of feline medicine and has a particular liking for soft tissue surgery. Of course, Melissa was nominatively destined for feline medicine.

183 Glenmore Road, Paddington NSW 2021



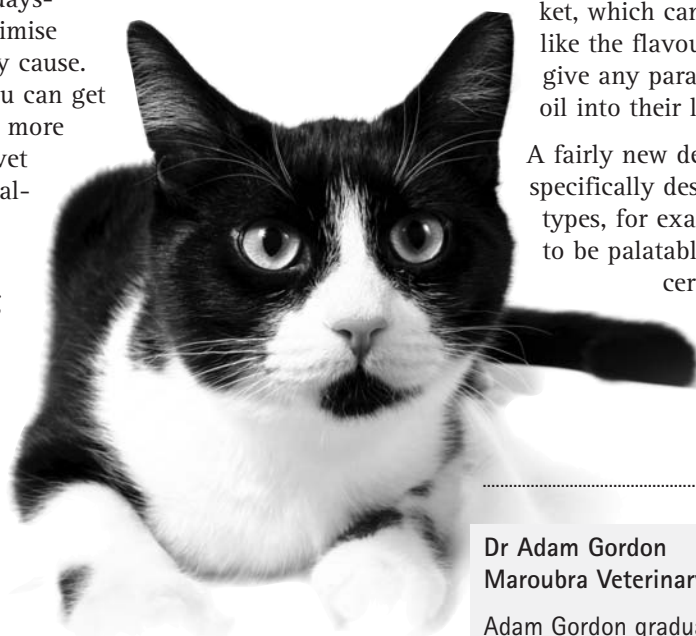
Dear Dr Melissa,

My three year-old cat (just a domestic moggy) used to meow around dinner-time, which for her, is shortly after we get home from work. Over the winter months this has escalated to the point where she meows even after being fed. It continues until well after we've had our evening meal. It's driving my husband nuts and it's starting to wear on me too. My husband thinks we should just lock her outside or in another room while the meowing is going on but I would rather cure the problem but I'm not sure how to tackle it. It's especially distracting when I'm trying to make our dinner as she's at my feet and won't leave the kitchen area. When we originally got her, she would come and go from her food but now she's become quite greedy and works on her food until it's all gone. I've maintained her normal amount of dried food and at her last vet check (eight months ago) she was normal in weight. Should I increase her food portions or is there something I can do to stop the cat-nagging?

Isn't it funny how the cold weather brings out the appetite in all of us?! I certainly notice that a lot of the cats I see in practice put weight on over the winter months, partly due to an increased appetite and partly due to less activity (unfortunately, the same goes for me!). If her weight seems stable and her faeces are formed and normal, then it's not likely that she has a medical problem, but if you have any doubt about this then having her checked over is a good idea-even if just to ensure her weight has not reduced from last visit.

I've found that for cats that don't seem satisfied after their usual meal, trying a couple of different things may help. The first thing is considering increasing the proportion of wet food in the diet, as this has far greater water content than dry food, so tends to fill them up more but doesn't increase the energy intake. You may have to try a few different types to find something that suits, and I would recommend introducing the tinned food over a few days-especially if she is not used to it, to try to minimise any gastric upsets a sudden change in diet may cause. There are also 'light' forms of dry food that you can get (either containing more fibre or protein, so are more filling but don't put the weight on), and your vet will even stock some special dry foods specifically for weight loss that may work well.

The other tip worth considering is feeding smaller amounts more often. This is something I've personally found works well with one of my cats who particularly likes her food. I measure out each cats' food portion each morning and put it in a container with a lid,



then feed them from this in small amounts while I'm home. At dinnertime they share a tin of food, then the rest of the time it's dry food. I make sure there's always at least a small amount left over for just before bedtime in the hope they won't wake us up too early in the morning (which is getting harder in the Spring before daylight saving starts).

If she is really bothering you as you are getting your own dinner ready and you have tried the above and she has had her own dinner, then you can try putting her in another room while you're cooking. Remember not to pay her any attention while you do this-even negative attention-no telling her off or smacks!

I hope this helps her appetite and your sanity!

Dear Dr Catt,

We have a Chinchilla (but we don't think he's a pure-bred) who seems to have a hairball problem. Ludwig can't seem to cough them up fully and it's distressing to watch him trying to bring them up. Is there something I can give him to help bring them up? I've heard all sorts of stories about oils and other remedies that help with hairball problems, but I've been sceptical that they might be 'wives' tales'. I know you're probably going to say that I need to brush Ludwig more (I try to brush him at least three times a week). Is there any supplement or remedy for this?

Unfortunately hairballs are part and parcel of owning a long-haired cat, but some are more prone to getting them than others. There are some things that can help, and brushing is a great idea, so yes, do this as often as you can (good for your wellbeing too, if he likes his brushes!). Make sure he is not over-grooming, and ensuring he has thorough flea control is important for this.

There are specific pastes you can buy from the local vet, petstore or supermarket, which can be helpful for furballs. They are paraffin based, and most cats like the flavour, so they are relatively easy to administer. It is important not to give any paraffin oil itself by mouth, as cats can inhale small amounts of the oil into their lungs. This can eventually lead to serious respiratory problems.

A fairly new development in cat nutrition is the production of special foods specifically designed for cats that get hairballs. They often come in different types, for example Adult Hairball Control, or Light Hairball Control, and seem to be palatable as we sell a lot of these diets. My cats love them! They have a certain proportion of vegetable fibre in them, which helps prevent the formation of furballs by moving the hair through the gastrointestinal system and out via the faeces. We have had a lot of positive feedback from clients about these foods since they were introduced.

Dog & small animal questions

Dr Adam Gordon joins the Urban Animal Vet quest team to answer your dog and small animal questions. We thought we would take an opportunity to ask a couple of questions which always seem to crop up-yet are important to deal with in a swift manner-bites.

Dog bites are a common occurrence but need to be dealt with quickly. Often they happen out of vet hours or on a weekend. So what should people do if their dog sustains a dog bite?

Dr Adam Gordon
Maroubra Veterinary Hospital

Adam Gordon graduated from the University of Sydney in 1990. He completed a Masters degree in Veterinary Studies at Murdoch University in 2002. Adam has been in companion animal practice since 1990 and is principal of Maroubra Veterinary Hospital.

88 Bunnerong Road, Pagewood NSW 2035
Phone: 9344 8722



There are several basic principles to follow when dealing with dog bite wounds. Pet owners can start using these when faced with a dog bite wound before seeing their vet, in order to minimise infection and other complications that can follow a dog bite.

The first and most important principle to follow if your pet has been bitten by another dog (and this applies to any time your pet is injured or in pain) is to avoid being bitten yourself while tending to the wound. Even the most placid and good natured dogs may bite their owner when they are in pain or shock after being attacked by another dog.

A soft cloth muzzle can be used to ensure the pet owner is not bitten. A tea towel or T shirt is tied firmly around the muzzle whilst the wound is being treated.

The next important thing to do is try and determine the severity of the wound. Deep lacerations can bleed heavily resulting in severe shock and possible death. If blood is flowing freely from the wound, controlling the bleeding should take precedence over any other aspects of wound management. A clean towel or item of clothing should be placed over the wound and firm direct pressure applied until the pet is taken to the vet. If the wound is on a limb try and keep it elevated.

If the wound is gaping open and bleeding is not heavy, the next first aid principle to follow is to protect the wound from further infection and get the wound as clean as possible. Pet owners should avoid the temptation of putting their finger in the wound to see how deep it is. Whilst dog bites are already dirty contaminated wounds, bacteria that normally live on our skin can make the infection worse.

If there is a lot of hair around the wound this should be clipped away so that there is no hair in the wound. Some KY gel from a new tube can be squirted into the wound while the hair is being clipped to stop more hair entering the wound.

The wound should then be thoroughly flushed to try and remove foreign debris. The best way to achieve this is by squirting sterile saline into the wound with a syringe. Large volumes can be used safely – at least 250ml or a cup as a guide. If sterile saline is unavailable then tap water is better than nothing. You should avoid using products like Dettol and hydrogen peroxide as they damage tissue and will delay wound healing.

If possible, the wound should be covered until veterinary assistance can be sought. This will help prevent further contamination and injury through self trauma.

I think it is a great idea for all pet owners to have a basic first aid kit at home. It is worth asking your local vet for advice on what to have in it. Alternatively they may make one up for you. Having things like syringes, sterile saline and dressing materials handy can be very helpful when it comes to dealing with wounds. Good wound management in the first one hour post injury can make a big difference to the outcome. It is important to remember that dog bites are always contaminated and will be infected, so antibiotics will almost always be required. This will mean seeing your vet as soon as possible after the injury has occurred.

Bird vet questions

**Dr Alex Rosenwax – BVSC MACVSc (Avian Health)
Bird & Exotics Veterinarian, Green Square.**

Alex graduated from the University of Sydney in 1991. He achieved Membership of the Avian Health Chapter of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in 1996. In November 1996 he opened the first and only Sydney all bird and exotic pet practice. The Clinic moved to 1 Hunter St Waterloo in 2003 and sees approximately 80% birds, and 20% fish, reptiles and other exotic pets. Alex is the current president of the Australian Veterinary Association Avian Group.

Shop 3, Block D, 1 Hunter St Waterloo, Sydney 2017
Ph: 02 93196111



I have a 2 year old cockatiel and a 4 year old galah. My birds do not have their wings clipped as I like to let them fly around the house. I am afraid I could lose them if they fly away. Can birds be microchipped?

Your galah can be microchipped and your cockatiel may be able to be microchipped. Any bird weighing 100g or more can be microchipped. Smaller birds such as cockatiels can also be done but individual cases need to be discussed with your veterinarian.

A microchip is a sterile device the size of a rice grain, which contains an electronic identification code. This code is represented on an accompanying barcode label, the appearance and number of which is unique to your bird.

As is the case with dogs and cats, birds can be implanted with a microchip to assist in their identification. If the microchip number is then registered with the Australasian Animal Registry, a national database is available to assist in the return of the bird to the rightful owner. This is especially important in the case of loss, dispute over ownership or theft.

Unlike dogs and cats, the microchip is not placed under the skin but rather it is generally implanted in the left breast muscle. However to ensure a bird has not already been microchipped, your veterinarian will thoroughly examine the entire bird using a microchip scanner.

As the microchip is placed into the muscle using a sterile needle, a light general anaesthetic is used to minimise any stress to the bird. The procedure itself only takes a few minutes but to ensure your bird is fully awake after the anaesthesia you may be asked to remain at the clinic for 10-15 minutes.

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Another bitey question for you Adam and one that often occurs in summer months—while we're normally away on holiday—what action should be taken should a dog or small animal be bitten by a snake?

If your dog is bitten by a snake it is important to try and remain calm. It will be necessary to act quickly and decisively. It is very helpful if the snake can be identified. If the dog has killed the snake in the process of being bitten the snake should be brought to the vet for identification. Do not under any circumstances attempt to catch or kill the snake as you will run the risk of being bitten.

The part of the dog that has been bitten should be immobilised and kept below the level of the heart. The bite site should be cleaned with soap and water.

When the bite is on a limb a splint should be applied. A firm dressing is placed at least 5cm above and below the bite. If bandaging material is unavailable a handkerchief or shredded clothing can be used.

There are many misconceptions about managing snake bites. The following guidelines should always be adhered to.

- Do not cut the bite
- Do not apply a tourniquet
- NEVER try to suck out the venom by mouth.
- Do not apply cold and/or ice packs. Recent studies indicate that application of cold or ice makes the injury much worse.

Most importantly, seek veterinary attention as soon as possible – administration of the appropriate antivenom will give the best chance of surviving a snake bite.

If requested, the clinic forwards the completed "Application for Registration" form to the Australasian Animal Registry. The information supplied on the form is entered onto the database. Should your bird subsequently be handed in to a veterinary clinic it will be scanned and the microchip number that is read will enable the Australasian Animal Registry to retrieve your contact details from the database.

I am a smoker and live in a medium-sized two bedroom house and I am worried about the effects it could have on my birds. I have 3 budgies and 2 cockatiels. I do not smoke in the same room as my birds but I do smoke in the house. Is this a problem?

Smoking in the house, even in a different room is a big problem for all bird species. Birds are even more sensitive to aerosol (airborne) toxins than humans, dogs and cats as their respiratory system is extremely efficient. This is to allow them to have enough oxygen to fly. The general rule of thumb is that if you can smell the smoke or other airborne toxins, then the bird needs to be in a completely different airspace. Problems with tobacco smoke include coughing, sneezing, sinusitis, conjunctivitis, skin irritation and secondary bacterial infections of the respiratory tract. These signs can, if left untreated, lead to the death of your birds so you need to smoke outside. Other airborne toxins that should be avoided near your birds include marijuana, chlorhexidine and chlorine disinfectants, natural gas, carbon monoxide from travel in poorly ventilated cars and aerosol deodorants.



ANIMALS GREAT & SMALL PHYSIOTHERAPY

Kristine Edwards is a physiotherapist and acupuncturist with a Masters degree in Animal Physiotherapy, and works with both animals and people.

For more information please call
Kristine on: 02 95604514 or 0408229341

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