

Does Your Pet Suffer From Bladder Infections?

Our pets have many ways of communicating with us. When they have urinary tract infections (UTI's), they usually communicate very directly by leaving puddles in obvious places! UTI's cause irritation, burning, and a feeling of having to eliminate frequently. This often results in lots of little puddles or drops of urine on floors, rugs, piles of clothing and even in sinks by our dog and cat family members. Sometimes the urine is red in color due to blood from the infection. This is our pets' way of getting our attention and saying, "Help! Take me to the veterinarian." There are a number of factors that can cause a pet to experience these symptoms, and the first step is to ask a veterinarian to conduct a urinalysis and look for blood, bacteria and urinary crystals, among other things.

What Causes Bladder Infections?

UTI's can be caused by a number of different factors. If, for example, a pet has to hold its bladder too long, not being given the opportunity to urinate can cause bacteria to travel up the urethra, thus causing an infection. Some animals metabolize their food differently, and minerals in the food can turn into sharp crystals in the urine that cut the side of the bladder, leading to blood in the urine and an infection. Other times the symptoms can be indicative of conditions such as bladder stones, kidney disease or even cancer.

Determining a Diagnosis

A radiograph is often necessary to rule out bladder

stones and kidney stones. Radiographs can also reveal or rule out some cancers. In rare cases, special contrast and double-contrast radiographs are needed to reveal either bladder stones that are otherwise invisible to the x-ray or certain hard-to-detect cancers. More often than not, the symptoms are merely caused by a bacterial bladder infection or cystitis. Antibiotics will clear up the infection, and sometimes anti-inflammatory medications are helpful to stop the urgent feeling and the irritation. Difficult cases sometimes require a bacterial culture and sensitivity test to determine the most effective antibiotic or combination of antibiotics.

Does Diet Matter?

Because of the role of diet in the formation of crystals that can lead to bladder infections and bladder stones, your veterinarian may recommend a prescription diet for your pet. These diets make a huge difference in preventing recurring urinary issues, because a very large percentage of animals that have crystals in their urine will have recurring problems if they do not change to a special diet that prevents such crystals from forming. There are several different kinds of urinary crystals, and your veterinarian is skilled in selecting the best preventative diet based on the urinalysis findings.

The bottom line in discovering if your pet is suffering from a bladder infection is to pay close attention to the message your pet is sending if you notice inappropriate urination. Be sure to take your pet to its veterinarian right away for diagnosis and treatment. A UTI is no fun, but proper treatment can have your dog or cat feeling great again in just a day or two.