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Pyometra (Pie o me tra)

At our hospital, we make every effort to educate our fellow pet owners about steps that they can take to prevent their pets from getting sick, developing illnesses and incurring injuries that can cause pain, discomfort, be costly to treat or even life-threatening. One of the most common preventable conditions that we have seen over the years is pyometra. This is a condition in which dogs and cats develop infections in their uteruses. As with people, animals have bacteria in, around, and on their bodies. People or animals usually do not develop infections from their own bodies unless one of the body's protective mechanisms such as the skin and other bodily tissues such as the bladder or the immune system is compromised in some way. The hormonal changes that female dogs and cats experience during "heat cycles" or when they become fertile predisposes them to uterine infections. This infection in the uterus causes the accumulation of "pus" and fluid in the uterus.

Pets that have pyometra can have a variety of symptoms which include a loss of appetite, a distended abdomen, lethargy, vomiting, depression, increased thirst, vaginal discharge, and a fever. Some of these cases of pyometra which do not have a detectable vaginal discharge are referred to as "closed pyometra" and can be misdiagnosed because the symptoms are similar to other illnesses. Other cases of pyometra have a thick vaginal discharge but must be distinguished from severe urinary tract infections or other uterine diseases such as metritis.

We have seen some very sick pets at our hospital that had pyometra. The treatment of choice for pyometra is an ovariohysterectomy with removal of the ovaries and uterus. However, these patients are at high risk for surgery because they are often febrile, dehydrated, weak, and the infections can spread to other parts of the body (septicemia). On the positive side, performing an ovariohysterectomy in female dogs also reduces their risk of developing mammary cancer since dogs that have not been spayed have an increased risk of developing such cancer. Patients with

pyometra are not the best candidates for surgery because they are already sick and their immune and circulatory systems are already challenged by this condition. These types of surgeries are always risky because the

When we diagnose a female dog with pyometra, it is urgent to treat the pet as soon as possible because these patients can deteriorate or even die. Pets that are ill from pyometra will need intensive treatment including antibiotics, intravenous fluids, and sometimes hospitalization. Since these patients are severely ill, there is usually a slow recovery period after surgery, especially for older dogs and cats. The occurrence of pyometra and the associated surgical procedure is totally unpredictable but it can be devastating and challenging for the pet as well as emotionally and financially devastating for the pet owner. Therefore, we recommend that you have your pet spayed or have an ovariohysterectomy performed before your pet has its first heat cycle. After all, it is also more convenient and less expensive to plan for and schedule an ovariohysterectomy versus having to do an unexpected visit to the local Veterinary Emergency Clinic.



What To Do About Those “Lumps” On Your Pet

We often detect growths or “lumps” or “knots” on our patients during physical examinations that clients are often not aware of. We also have clients to present their pets with “lumps” or growths that they have discovered on their pets and are concerned about. Any type of mass or growth (“lump”) is an indication that there has been a change in the tissue involved causing it to appear abnormal. The abnormal accumulation of extra tissue cells causes the tissue to form into a “lump”. This abnormal accumulation of tissue can be a wart, a cyst, a granuloma, or cancer. One cannot look at a “lump” with the human eye and determine what type of growth that it is or what it will do in the future. A pathologist is needed to analyze the concerned tissue and confirm the diagnosis, prognosis, and anticipated behavior of the involved tissue.

Benign cancer is cancer that is confined to one location but does not cause damage to surrounding tissue and other parts of the body. This is often what some refer to as “a tumor”. A tumor “sounds” a bit more promising than cancer but a tumor is indeed an accumulation of excess cells which means that it is really cancer. Malignant cancer means that the accumulated mass of cells is growing fast and causing damage to the surrounding tissue. Metastatic cancer is cancer that tends to spread to lymph nodes and other parts of the body.

There are usually questions about whether the tumors need to be removed or whether they are “hurting” or “bothering” anything. We can grossly identify benign growths such as warts and can aspirate fluid from certain growths and classify them as cysts. However, one cannot look at a tumor tumors with the human eye and determine what type of cancer that it is. Just as in humans, we must obtain a sample of the tissue by aspirating the growth with a needle or removing it surgically and sending samples to the laboratory for a pathologist to determine what type of cancer that it is.

All growths on pets must be observed and monitored because some growths can be aggressive or unpredictable. We have seen certain growths that appeared to be growing slowly or not at all and suddenly they will begin growing fast. When we review our records, we sometimes see that we had recommended aspirating the mass or surgically removing it. Ironically, I recently learned that a relative had surgery to remove a growth that had been present for years but suddenly burst open one night and started bleeding. We always recommend that any mass which is growing should be aspirated or surgically removed while it is small. If a mass is growing, it will likely damage adjacent tissue as it grows and/or attach to other tissue. Unfortunately, some pet owners wrongly conclude that a growth is “not hurting anything” because the pet does not appear to have any discomfort. However, all growths have the potential to cause some type of damage to nearby or underlying tissue microscopically although we may not be able to see what is happening with the human eye. The larger that a mass becomes, the more tissue that will have to be removed and the more expensive the surgery will be when the surgery is finally performed. Therefore, it is better to have these “lumps” removed while the pet is in good health, still relatively young, and the mass is not bleeding, infected, or growing fast. By the way, we have seen a lot of surprises over the years on biopsies or fine needle aspiration cytology reports.

Case of the Month

“Whiskey”, one of our furrbuddies presented to our hospital because his parents were concerned that he was in pain with limping in one of his rear limbs. On presentation, it was obvious that “Whiskey” was in much pain and was not very comfortable with the examination and manipulation of the leg that he was lame in. Dr. Gooding gave “Whiskey” some pain medication to help him to be more comfortable and a light sedative so that he could further examine and perform radiographs on the injured limb. Dr. Gooding was suspicious that “Whiskey” had dislocated his hip or had fractured the top part of the femur or thigh bone. Radiographs confirmed Dr. Gooding’s suspicion and revealed that “Whiskey” had in fact dislocated his hip somehow, although the owners were not aware of a specific injury. Dr. Gooding made numerous attempts to relocate “Whiskey’s” hip into its proper place and applied a sling to prevent it from re-luxating. However, radiographs revealed that “Whiskey’s” hip joint would not stay in the socket. Therefore, Dr. Gooding recommended that “Whiskey’s” owners consult with a Board certified veterinary surgeon to see what might be the best option for “Whiskey”. However, “Whiskey’s” owners selected to have Dr. Gooding to do what he could to help “Whiskey” so that he would not be in pain and could walk on his injured leg again. We performed pre-anesthetic bloodwork to evaluate “Whiskey’s” internal organs and Dr. Gooding then performed an orthopedic procedure called a femoral head ostectomy on “Whiskey”. Thanks to Dr. Gooding’s efforts, our tender, loving-care, and good pain management, immediately following recovery “Whiskey” was standing up in his cage,

and ready to eat. Over the next month or so, “Whiskey” started applying more and more pressure to his surgical limb and was running and playing within two months as if he had not had any surgery at all. Hip luxation is a fairly common occurrence in dogs and must be diagnosed early and the joint replaced before permanent damage is done to the joint capsule and ligaments.



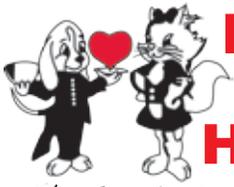
Veterinary Mythology

"I can save money by looking on the Internet, find out what is wrong with my pet, and treat it with a home remedy." (The Internet is a source of information. It can be a useful tool to gather background information about a specific disease. However, the Internet does not have a brain that contains information gained through thousands of hours of laboratory studies, classroom courses, microscopic slide reviews, and decades of experience to systematically sort through all of this information to decide the most likely diagnosis, prognosis, and then determine the best and safest medication, treatment, or surgical option to resolve a specific disease in a given pet. This is why a trained and knowledgeable veterinarian will always have the advantage over the Internet. At our hospital, we have seen many pets suffer unnecessarily because their owners thought that they could save money by reading information on the Internet and/or guessing what was wrong with the pet. For example, we once examined a cat that had lost a lot of its weight. The owner thought that the cat had "worms". Our examination of this particular patient revealed that it had a heart murmur, a loud "thumping" heart beat, an increased appetite, and increased water consumption. Laboratory results confirmed my suspicion that this patient had hyperthyroidism. On the other hand, we have saved or extended the lives of many patients because their owners presented them to our hospital when they first noticed symptoms and we were able to make a correct diagnosis and initiate treatment immediately. For example, some individuals thought their pets were constipated when the pets actually had kidney failure, a urethral obstruction, stomach or intestinal cancer, a splenic tumor, or an obstruction caused by a foreign body. All of these conditions can be successfully treated in some cases IF they are diagnosed early enough. Therefore, these patients' lives can be extended or their quality of life improved.

"It is cheaper or less expensive to order medications from online pharmacies versus getting them at my veterinarian. (Large companies have large budgets ("big bucks") that allow them to market advertisements which falsely convey that veterinarians are charging too much for pet products such as flea and tick products, medications, and other services. Most veterinary hospitals are small businesses and cannot afford to place ads on television to convey to pet owners that they are the best and most reliable source of information and products for pets. Large corporations can often sell products at a lower price because they can afford to buy large quantities and receive bulk discounts, whereas, your local veterinarian is simply trying to purchase products so that they will be convenient for you to simply call and just drop by and pick-up. We make every effort to be competitive with our fees and we have found that our prices for many products are less expensive than what the online and corporations offer. If you actually give it some thought, supporting your local veterinary hospital will benefit your pet and your community simultaneously versus supporting a large corporation in another state that is likely already making millions of dollars but is not creating jobs or reinvesting in your community. Pembroke Animal Hospital hires staff members, hires and mentors high school, college, and graduate students, makes donations to charities in our community, pays taxes in our community, spends dollars in our community, volunteers and participates in community service. So, your support of our hospital can go a LONG WAYS!

My pet "looks okay" so it does not need to have an examination. It is impossible to just look at a person and confirm that the person has a brain tumor, breast cancer, prostate cancer, kidney failure, pneumonia or congestive heart failure. It is also impossible to look at an animal and confirm that they have one of these same illnesses. We cannot tell you how many abnormal findings that we have detected during the physical examinations of our patients over the years that their owners were not aware of. Just recently, we examined some beautiful puppies that appeared to be normal but had severe intestinal hookworm infections and also yeast infections in their ears that their owners were not aware of. The EGG phase of parasite infections are microscopic and cannot be seen with the human eye. Some people mistakenly assume that their pets do not have intestinal parasites because they do not see the "worm" in the pet's stools. The worm like thing ("spaghetti like") is an ADULT parasite. There can be premature stages of the parasites ("BABIES") in the body that cannot be seen with the human eye and may not be causing any symptoms thus yet. However, some of these "baby" or immature parasites can be transferred to people, particularly young children and those individuals with compromised immune systems such as senior citizens, those getting chemotherapy, or those with hepatitis or HIV or infections.

My dog(or cat) is not showing any signs of pain to me so it must not be in pain. This is one of the biggest myths that I have ever heard. Animals do demonstrate signs of pain but these signs may be overlooked by those who are not trained or experienced enough to identify them when they are subtle. A pet owner may not detect signs of pain in a pet but a veterinarian may notice certain abnormalities on a physical examination that indicate the presence of pain. Most pets are not going to "squeal" as if they are in pain or complain like humans do when they are in pain but animals will change the way that they rise, walk, climb stairs, or change their daily routines. We often note anatomical changes in our patients during examinations that indicate that they are in pain but these changes are not so obvious to their owners. According to Dr. Stanley Coren, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, "In the wild, an animal that is injured or infirm is vulnerable to attack, and there is a survival advantage to act like nothing is wrong even when something most definitely is." We have also taken X-rays of pets with joint pain and we were completely surprised as to how these pets were even walking on their joints considering the severity of the degenerative joint disease that we observed on the radiographs. In fact, we have seen pets with subluxated(almost out of the socket) hip joints that were still walking but in significant pain. The degenerative osteoarthritis was so severe in one case that we referred the patient to a surgeon but the surgeon refused to do surgery because of a possible poor post-surgical response. We have also examined many patients which their owners thought were in a lot of pain but our examination and X-rays revealed more of a neurologic condition such as intervertebral disk disease in their backs that caused the pets to walk as if they were in pain. Some dogs also have hypothyroidism which may cause some weakness thereby amplifying what looks like pain. In today's world, there are so many options available to treat pets with osteoarthritis to help keep them mobile and comfortable. An arthritis medication for cats is even available now.



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A NEW SERVICE at Pembroke - Therapy Laser

In October, we started using a therapeutic laser to help relieve pain and promote healing in our patients. The therapy laser can be used to treat and provide relief from arthritis, infections, abscesses, ligament injuries, severe gingivitis, surgical incisions. Please call and ask about this awesome treatment option and schedule an appointment for your pet.

February Is Pet Dental Health Month Special

February is National Pet Dental Health Month and we will be offering special discounts on dental services to promote the importance of proper pet dental care and dental hygiene in overall health and longevity.