



Acton Animal Hospital  
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# Pet Care News

Winter 2010



## Dental Care



Did you know that inflammation/infection of the gums (gingivitis) can affect the overall health of our pets? Not only can gingival disease cause your pet discomfort, decreased appetite, and malodorous breath but gum disease can also enter the bloodstream causing disease of internal organs such as the heart and the kidneys.

Home dental care such as tooth brushing, providing chew toys, and feeding dental diets can reduce or slow the build-up of tartar. However, most pets will require veterinary dental care at some point in their lives. Prophylactic dental cleaning can help prevent the need for tooth extractions and gum surgery.

If a dental exam of your pet reveals damaged teeth, heavy tartar, or inflamed gingival tissue, dental care is needed. General anesthesia is necessary to clean teeth, examine the mouth closely, and to extract any infected teeth and provides the pet with minimum discomfort for these procedures.

**February is Pet Dental Care Month—10% discount offered on dental prophy scheduled in February!**

## Canine Influenza Virus

First noted in 2003, a new strain of the equine H3N8 virus was found to affect only the canine species. Currently, it has been reported in thirty or more states in the United States, but there is evidence that it will continue to spread throughout the U.S. Although many of the signs of canine influenza virus appear similar to kennel cough, it is a different etiology. The causes of kennel cough are primarily due to a bacterial organism, *Bordetella bronchiseptica* or a virus, Parainfluenza.

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Since there is no natural immunity to canine influenza virus, many dogs will become infected if exposed to the virus. About 80% of dogs with infection will show clinical signs. The remaining 20% without overt clinical signs of disease are still capable of spreading the infection to new patients. Outbreaks occur primarily in places where there is close confinement of dogs such as in boarding kennels, breeding facilities, grooming establishments, animal shelters, veterinary hospitals, dog day care facilities, and show rings.

Among infected dogs is a range of severity of clinical signs with about 80% of cases showing mild clinical signs. Persistent coughing, sneezing, low grade to high grade fever, nasal and ocular discharge, malaise and decreased appetite are the reported signs seen in many diagnosed cases. More serious clinical signs of high fever (104 degrees to 106 degrees Fahrenheit) and complications of pneumonia have been reported in about 20% of infected dogs. Coughing can persist for even one month post-infection.

Diagnosis of canine influenza remains challenging as proper timing during the course of the infection is vital to proper identification of the etiologic agent. Nasal swabs or blood samples must be taken from suspected patients to confirm diagnosis.

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A safe and effective vaccine has become available and is recommended for dogs with higher risk of possible exposure. While the vaccine cannot totally prevent infection, it acts to greatly decrease the severity of the clinical signs of infection. It is safe for puppies that are six weeks of age or older and for adult dogs. No adverse reactions were reported during testing of the vaccine. The recommended vaccine protocol is for a patient to receive two immunizations two to three weeks apart with an annual booster subsequently. This vaccine is now available at Acton Animal Hospital.

## Did you know?

Dogs only lived an average of SEVEN Years in the 1930s. Currently, dogs are living to FOURTEEN or FIFTEEN years with proper care.

*(Veterinary Forum/July 2009)*

## Urinary Problems in Pets

### Feline Urinary Problems

Common signs of urinary problems you may observe in your cat:

- Straining to urinate
- Urine incontinence ( urine seems to be leaking out of bladder )
- Blood seen in urine
- Vocalizing during urination
- Increased frequency of urination
- Urination in unusual places and not in the litter box
- Unable to urinate



There are many causes of urinary problems in cats. Infection or inflammation of the lower urinary tract, formation of crystals or stones (uroliths) in the bladder, ureters, or kidneys, tumors of the bladder or congenital malformations of the bladder or urethra can all be possible reasons for the observed difficulties. Male cats have narrower urethras and are more prone to have a urolith cause an obstruction to urine flow. If the obstruction is not treated, the cat may suffer kidney damage or even lead to death.

### Canine Urinary Problems

Many of the same signs listed above for the cat may be observed in your dog:

- Straining to urinate
- Urine incontinence
- Blood seen in urine
- Increased frequency of urination
- Decreased urine stream
- Licking of the genital area
- Inflammation of the genital area

Again there are many causes of urinary problems in dogs. Similarly to cats, infections, bladder stones or crystal formation can cause urinary flow problems leading to obstruction or irritation to the bladder wall. Tumors, congenital malformations, or certain viral or bacterial infections can lead to urinary problems of the upper or lower urinary tract.

Consult your veterinarian whenever you observe any of the urinary problem signs listed above. If you believe that your cat or dog is unable to urinate, contact your veterinarian immediately for urgent medical care.

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## Winter Weather Reminders



Winter surface conditions are tough on your dog's feet. Check footpads and nails frequently for skin irritations, broken or cracked nails, or pad cuts or scrapes. Rinse and wipe footpads after walking on salty or sandy surfaces. Condition pads with Bag Balm or other pad products. Consider protective booties for pets with special sensitivities to the feet.

Remember that short-haired pets get cold more quickly outside. Some cold-sensitive breeds may need to wear a pet coat for severely cold weather.

## Reminders!

- Call ahead to refill any prescription medications for your pet.
- Call ahead to reorder any prescription pet foods before your pet runs out. Hills Food is ordered every Monday, and Royal Canin, Purina, and Iams on the 1st and 15th of every month.
- Remember to schedule a physical exam yearly for your pet even if all vaccinations are up-to-date.
- Important: A rabies certificate is required for treatment at Animal Emergency Care. Keep it in a handy place so you can "grab and go."