

Pet Talk

THREE NOTCH VETERINARY HOSPITAL
PARK VETERINARY CLINIC

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WHAT YOUR CAT IS TELLING YOU ABOUT IT'S HEALTH

Cats are masters at hiding symptoms of disease. If you look at it from their perspective, it is not a great idea to announce to the world that you are not feeling well because, not only are cats fearless predators, but they are small and could potentially be killed or eaten by bigger predators! The list below includes signs we may look for during a routine health exam. Our hope is to keep your cat healthy and happy for a long time and routine yearly or twice yearly exams (depending on your cat's age) will help us help you!



3. Changes in Activity: A decrease in energy may be abrupt or gradual. The latter is often attributed to "just getting older", however, as there is no medical reason that a healthy individual should "slow down" due to increasing age, a cause should be sought.

Dehydration, pain from anything, including arthritis and low potassium are some of the problems that should be evaluated. The reverse is also true: an increase in energy in a previously normal cat may be an indicator of incipient illness, most notably, hyperthyroidism or hypertension.

Subtle signs of sickness of your cat:
(www.healthycatsforlife.com)

A cat owner needs to know what to look for and how significant minor changes such as the following can be. Knowing this will be a useful tool for your vet visit:

1. Inappropriate Elimination: Regardless of how "deliberate" it may seem to be, when a cat is avoiding or not using the litter box, they are trying to tell you something. This message may be of physical discomfort or psychological distress. Physical causes include inflammation of the bladder or bowel, arthritis, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, dementia. Psychological distress may be from social disturbance, boredom, the lack of opportunity to act the repertoire of cat behaviors, anxiety due to other animals, children or adults.

2. Changes in Interaction: Changes in how a cat interacts with people, other animals or his/her environment may indicate pain or distress.

4. Changes in Sleeping Habits: This refers both to pattern of sleeping (times of the day and night) as well as postures. A cat with pain or with dementia may either sleep for longer or for shorter periods than previously. With FIV infection, the latter may yowl suggesting a decline in vision or hearing, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, pain or dementia.



5. Changes in Food and Water Consumption: As with sleep, this refers not just to quantity, but also to changes in behaviors associated with these activities (where, how often, amount at each instance, body posture, etc.).

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CHECK OUT PAGE 2
FOR INFORMATION ON
APVES, our partner emergency
facility, located in :

Calvert County
Allied Partners Veterinary
Emergency Services

Special points of interest:

- * Cats are masters at hiding symptoms
- * Changes in activity can be medical reasons – not "just getting older"
- * Minor Changes can be significant and/or early signs of illnesses.

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Mission Statement
Service Numbers
Office Hours
Available on our website
www.threenotch.com



Links for both locations available on our website...www.threenotch.com

EMERGENCY SERVICES

ALLIED PARTNERS VETERINARY EMERGENCY SERVICES

Three Notch Veterinary Hospital and Park Veterinary Clinic provide after hours emergency services through our partner emergency service, Allied Partner Veterinary Emergency Services.

APVES is located just north of Prince Frederick, Maryland in Huntingtown. APVES has emergency hours weekdays: 6PM-8AM, weekends and holidays: 24 hours.

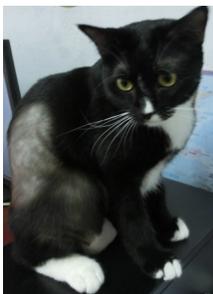
**You may reach them by calling:
410.535.9722**

To learn more about APVES visit their website
www.vetmash.com/APVES



6. Unexplained Weight Loss or Gain: As gratifying as it is to see rapid weight loss in a **previously** obese patient, even for those on appropriate dietary regimes, it isn't often a dramatic change. Oral pain may result in lack of appetite. Gradual weight loss may be related to aging but should be monitored and investigated. Weight gain is most often from excess calories but could also be due to abdominal or thoracic fluid accumulation. Helpful tools include repeated body weight, body condition score and percentage weight change assessments

7. Changes in Grooming: Excessive grooming may be due to a skin irritation (allergy, fleas, dryness), a neuropathy, or psychogenic (as a way to release endorphins and reduce stress). A decrease in grooming is often associated with pain, often arthritic, oral or dental. Hairballs may be a sign of dermatologic, psychogenic, altered digestive motility or pain.



8. Signs of Stress: Along with aforementioned inappropriate elimination and over-grooming, signs of distress include hiding, chewing on non-food items, a flicking tail or ear placement further back than normal.



9. Changes in Vocalization: Night-time yowling is but one example. Others include a change in tone, pitch, urgency and frequency of vocalizing.

10. Bad Breath: Numerous oral and dental conditions result in halitosis: periodontal disease is extremely common in cats but infected ulcers, tumors, infected salivary glands, abscesses and odor from anal sacs or an infected body region can spread through the cats grooming habits.



Author,
Kathy Bennett, DVM

OBEIDENCE CORNER

H.E.L.P. - Process Makes Perfect

Hi Trainers- In this edition of Obedience Corner, we're going to tackle every behavioral issue you've ever seen in four steps! Sound too good to be true? It's actually not! Now that I have your attention, let's look at the fine print.

Logically, we all recognize there is no "one size fits all" method to solve every problem but there is a common process when solving your problems with Fido. No matter what behavior issues you're faced with, behaviorists, trainers, and owners should always consider the same steps in the same order. I've listed the steps to "HELP" you: (1) Health, (2) Environment, (3) Learning, (3) Punishment. The most common mistake we make when faced with a behavioral problem is focusing on just one or two of these steps but skipping the others. Let's go through some examples that describe what these steps are all about and how you should use them. Housebreaking – This common problem affects many dog owners and we'll use it to illustrate why these steps are so important.

(1) Health - When dealing with a difficult housebreaking situation, the first question we should ask is "are there any underlying medical issues?" These can range from urinary inflections to food allergies. If there is a medical issue causing the accidents and you don't address it, it's a losing battle.

(2) Environment - Are we using a crate while we're not home? Are we adequately cleaning soiled areas so that the smell doesn't cause future accidents? Do we feed and take the dog outside on a schedule appropriate for his age or development? If you don't set up a good environment with a reasonable schedule, again...it's a lost cause.

(3) Learning - When we've covered the previous bases, then we focus on rewarding the behavior we want through learning and positive training. When the dog does his business outside, do we treat and praise him? or do we just go back inside like nothing happened? We have to reward the pup when he gets it right so he knows that's what we're looking for.

(4) Punishment- No, that doesn't mean rubbing the dog's nose in poop. Eww! It means taking away something the dog wants. What I recommend is scooping the dog up (in mid-stream) so that he can't finish. This, combined with the look on your face, is all that's required. Yelling, spanking, etc. only cause your dog to avoid you and hide before making his mistakes.

Like I said, house breaking is an easy example. Now let's use these steps in a more complex problem. Food guarding or food aggression – In this example, the steps are not as easy to see but are critical to success and safety as you tackle a tough problem.

(1) Health - Most of the time, there isn't an obvious medical issue that causes guarding but we always need to ensure a dog is in good health whenever a behavior problem surfaces suddenly. Pain, loss of hearing/sight, or other diseases can make the sweetest dog become anxious or off-balance. Health issues can also result in sudden changes in personality.

(2) Environment - In the dog's surroundings, are people pestering him while he's eating or is his bowl in a high traffic location? Do we place two dogs next to each other and wonder why they are stressed out? Giving the dog space and not confronting a dog is often the best solution.

(3) Learning. The idea is to teach the dog a different skill to replace the behavior you don't like. In this case, the behavior you don't like is snapping at your hand when you reach for the food bowl. The behavior you want to teach might be sitting nicely as you prepare food. To start, teach the dog to sit with lots of treats; doing this while holding his food bowl is even better.

After he knows sit, then you can ask him to sit while you put a treat in the bowl as a reward. Repeat this exercise often enough and you'll have developed a new routine that results in him being happy when your hand approaches the bowl instead of stressed out and ready to snap.

(4) Punishment – The most common mistake I see is owners (and some trainers) using aggression in response to aggression. That's rarely a good idea because it just adds to the stress and can make the dog even more on guard. If you were successful with steps (1-3) but the dog regresses, your first response should be to double your efforts on steps 2 and 3 and amp up the positive training. You can also add a new step. Before you feed the dog, connect a long leash with the end far away from the food bowl. If the dog growls as you approach the bowl, simply pick up the end of the long leash and lead the dog away from his bowl. You took the dog away from what he wanted most with no fight, no bite. Now go back to step three and practice some fun sits with the food bowl.

These are just a few examples of how you can use the HELP thinking process to solve issues you have with dog behavior. Each individual action plan for each problem may be different but the HELP process is the same. Keep it in mind and it will help you create a better relationship with your dog.

GOOD LUCK

& HAPPY TRAINING!



BRIAN MARKOWICH, CPDT-KA
CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINER
AUTHOR AND EDITOR

