



CatWatch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine



INSIDE

| | |
|--|----------|
| Short Takes | 2 |
| Millions of cats go without veterinary care despite owners' bond with them. | |
| 'An Itchy Cat Feels Miserable' | 3 |
| An infestation of parasitic mites can also cause skin infection and hair loss. | |
| How to Handle a Choking Emergency | 4 |
| Common hazards are swallowing string, needles and large amounts of dry food. | |
| Ask Elizabeth | 8 |
| How to handle blending a household of two longtime cats with a service dog. | |

IN THE NEWS ...

How lost animals find their way back home

Heartwarming reports of lost dogs trekking miles back home regularly make the news. Now it's a cat's turn. Most recently: Holly, an indoor cat who bolted from her owners' RV at Daytona Beach.

Two months — and 190 miles later — an emaciated Holly arrived a mile from her West Palm Beach home. A woman took her to a veterinarian who found a microchip with the owners' information.

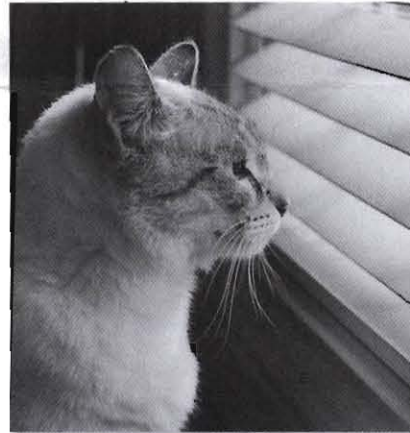
How do missing animals return home? "One could say their sense of direction is in their genes. Some animals seem to be able to navigate by light, birds especially by magnetic field, and odor — it smells like Palm Beach," says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., at Cornell. "Unfortunately, for every cat like Holly, hundreds do not make it home because of a poor sense of direction or because they are hit by cars or killed by other animals." ♦

New Options for Separation Anxiety

Far from being solitary, cats can panic and even suffer a form of grief while we're away or when the household schedule changes

Collars and diffusers that dispense calming pheromones have become popular among owners eager to ease their cats' separation anxiety. Less generally known but promising new options are supplements and specialized diets.

"The area of veterinary nutraceuticals to treat anxiety is becoming quite active," says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD,



Scents and special diets may help.

Ph.D., former president of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and James Law Professor emeritus of Animal Behavior at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Dietary supplements with ingredients like green tea, as well as flower essences like *Harmonease*, are also now available."

Another development is Royal Canin's recent introduction of Veterinary Diet Calm Formula Dry Cat

(continued on page 5)

Easing the Discomfort of GI Sufferers

Diet management and a synthetic steroid provide a one-two punch against inflammatory bowel disease

While the cure for inflammatory bowel disease remains elusive, new strides on the nutritional and pharmaceutical fronts are helping affected cats lead healthier lives. The use of novel or hydrolyzed diets coupled with the administration of the synthetic steroid prednisolone seems to offer an effective one-two therapeutic punch for most cats diagnosed with IBD, says Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Clinical Nutrition at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

By definition, IBD is an umbrella term that describes a group of chronic gastro-

intestinal disorders. The most common is lymphocytic-plasmacytic enterocolitis. Other forms include eosinophilic enterocolitis and granulomatous enteritis.

Immune Reaction. No matter what type of IBD your cat has, he may be in pain due to the increased number of inflammatory cells in the lining of his stomach, small intestine and colon. With IBD, a cat's immune system reacts to the presence of pathogenic agents, including bacteria or food antigens, and the mucosal lining responsible for regulating the

(continued on page 6)

CatWatch

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SHORT TAKES

Survey: 'The Love Doesn't Translate'

A survey of more than 50,000 U.S. households has uncovered a puzzling disconnect between cat owners' beliefs and actions. Owners in 2011 said they increasingly consider their cats family members — 56 percent, up from 49.4 percent in 2006. Yet just 27.1 percent of owners say they took their cats to the veterinarian only when they were sick.

Given that the feline population in the U.S. is approximately 74.1 million, about 20 million pet cats went without regular checkups and care in 2011. "The love for a family pet doesn't always translate into visits to the veterinarian — visits that can lead to a longer and healthier life," says the American Veterinary Medical Association, which reported results of its survey in its "2012 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook."

The survey, which is conducted every five years, also found that:

- ◆ More than half the owners — 55.1 percent — said they didn't take their cat to the veterinarian in 2011 because their pet didn't get sick or injured.
- ◆ The number of veterinary visits declined among cat-owning households; 55.1 percent had at least one visit to the veterinarian in 2011, down 13.5 percent from 2006.
- ◆ Nearly 10 percent of owners said they never took their cat for veterinary care.

If so many cats see the veterinarian only when they're ill, chances are many are getting sick when they don't need to be, said AVMA President Doug Aspros, DVM. "The human-animal bond is stronger than ever, but we are very concerned that pets may not be getting the preventive health care they need. What's important to remember is that preventive pet care can help save you money. Potential health problems can be diagnosed early — and costs can be reduced — if our pets visit the veterinarian on a regular basis."



Despite results of a comprehensive survey that found owners regard their cats as family members, millions of their pets go without regular veterinary care.

Where the Cats Are

In addition to reporting on veterinary visits, the AVMA book on ownership lists 10 states with the most cat-owning households. The states and their percentages of cat ownership: Vermont, 49.5; Maine, 46.4; Oregon, 40.2; South Dakota, 39.1; Washington, 39; West Virginia, 38.1; Kentucky, 36.8; Idaho, 34.6; Indiana, 34.4; and New Hampshire, 34.2.

The bottom 10 states: California, 28.3; South Carolina, 27.8; Rhode Island, 27.6; Alabama, 27.4; Florida, 27.3; Georgia, 27.3; Illinois, 26.3; Louisiana, 25.9; New Jersey, 25.3; and Utah, 24.6 percent. The District of Columbia had the lowest rate of cat ownership at 11.6 percent.

Farewell to 'Fluffy'

More than 485,000 pets are insured by Veterinary Pet Insurance. Of those, only 65 cats are registered under the name of Fluffy. Owners today seem to prefer people names for pets, at least the insured ones. The top five cat and dog names in 2012 were also among Baby.com's 100 most popular names that year. The top cat names, according to VIP:

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 1. Bella | 6. Smokey |
| 2. Max | 7. Shadow |
| 3. Chloe | 8. Tiger |
| 4. Oliver | 9. Charlie |
| 5. Lucy | 10. Tigger |

Bella also topped the list of dogs' names, and Charlie was No. 1 for birds and exotic pets. Winning honors as the wackiest cat name: Pico de Gato. ♦



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'An Itchy Cat Feels Miserable'

An infestation of parasitic mites can cause hair loss, dandruff and infected sores, and may also be contagious

Fortunately for cats, parasitic mites are more likely to feast on dogs, but felines aren't home free. Affected cats can appear moth-eaten, missing patches of fur on the head, neck and ears, but mange is more than unsightly. "An itchy cat feels miserable," says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, Medical Director of Cornell University Hospital for Animals. "Itchy cats often get grumpy and hide frequently, lose their appetites, and sleep a lot when they aren't itching." What's more, mites can cause skin conditions ranging from dandruff to infected sores.

Mites that cause problems in cats are *Demodex cati*, *Demodex gato*, *Notoedres cati* (feline scabies), *Cheyletiella* and *Otodectes* (ear mites). Whether a cat becomes infested depends on location, environment, preventive treatment and contact with infected animals.

Affected Regions. Take *Demodex gato* — please! The skin condition, which mimics other pruritic, or itching, disorders in cats, primarily occurs in the Southern and Gulf Coast regions, as does feline scabies. Unlike other types of demodex mites, which

are rarely contagious, *D. gato* is contagious among cats.

Cheyletiella, scabies and ear mites are also contagious. They spread through contact with an infected animal, bedding or environment. "Most mites die off in the environment within 24 hours, but they can survive longer in dens and bedding," Dr. Miller says.

Some mites can also move from dogs to cats. In addition to feline scabies (also known as head mange), cats can contract dog scabies, which causes the same signs as feline scabies: severe itching on the head and neck, hair loss, and red, raw or scabby skin.

Declining Frequency. *Cheyletiella*, another mite found in both cats and dogs, can be transmitted between these species. The good news is that it's easily kept under control with products that kill fleas and ticks, so the frequency of the disease has recently decreased. Cats on a sound preventive program with a product that kills fleas and ticks shouldn't have issues with *Cheyletiella*.

Demodex cati, a normal resident of feline skin, usually causes a problem

Because they're spread by contact, ear mites are most often seen in kittens.

when it over-populates. It, too, causes itching, hair loss and miliary dermatitis, characterized by tiny bumps on the skin. The difference between it and *Demodex gato* is that *D. cati* is typically associated with an underlying disease such as feline leukemia virus or other diseases that cause immune suppression.

The mites that most commonly affect cats are *Otodectes*. Because they're spread by contact, they're most often seen in kittens. Cats with ear mites have a dark-brown discharge that fills the ear canal. They often scratch their ears to relieve the itching, which may range from mild to severe. The mites can also live and feed outside the ear, causing signs elsewhere on the body.

Suspect *Cheyletiella* if your cat scratches or has dandruff along his spine. The mites tend to feed along the length of the back, resulting in dandruff.

Cats with *D. gato*, *D. cati* or scabies will scratch, lick or bite until the fur comes off in patches. Signs of *D. cati* may be limited to the head, neck and ears, a condition known as localized demodicosis. Scabies shows up on the face or front feet.

Complicating Factors. In severe cases of mite infestation, the itching is so intense that cats can't get any relief. They may lose weight from constant scratching or biting at the skin, or develop painful, crusty sores from self-inflicted wounds. Bacterial infections of these sores can be a complicating factor.

It's a good thing demodectic mange is rare in cats because convenient treatments are not yet available. Medicated shampoos and dips can help but take up to a year to be effective. Treatment for most other mites is easy and quick, Dr. Miller says. Dips, drops or topical treatments kill the mites. After taking a skin scraping and examining it microscopically to identify the type of mite, the veterinarian will choose the appropriate treatment based on the mite's species, your cat's age and any other health issues he may have. In most cases, the problem resolves within a month. ♦

Be Ready to Act in a Choking Emergency

Common hazards are string, needles and large amounts of dry food

Our cats don't live in a protective bubble, and their feline curiosity can create potential choking hazards. Some cats can start to choke if they gobble large amounts of dry food too quickly or accidentally swallow string.

Witnessing your cat in a wide-legged stance, coughing, gasping for breath can be frightening. That's why it's vital to know the proper response to keep him safe.

"Cats can choke on kibble or toys, but most commonly, they come to the emergency room choking on a foreign object due to chewing on thread or swallowing needles," says Dan Fletcher, DVM, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Emergency and Critical Care at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Foreign Object. He offers this advice if your cat is conscious and choking: If he is breathing without difficulty, monitor him for a few minutes to see if he can dislodge the object on his own. If he can't or is having difficulty breathing, try to identify a foreign object by carefully open-

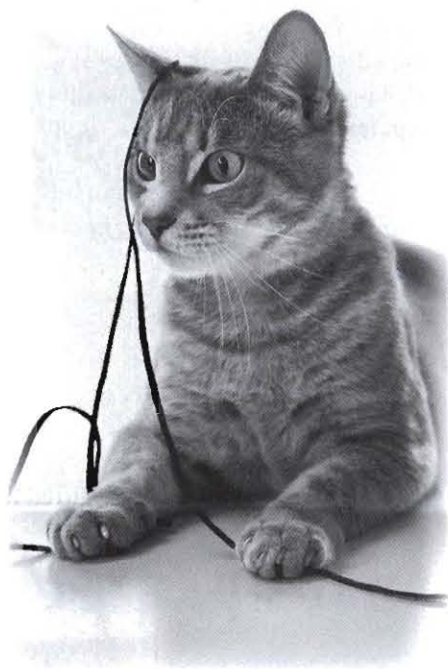
ing his mouth by grasping the top of his muzzle with one hand and the lower jaw with the other hand. You must be very cautious; even the sweetest cat can bite or scratch when stressed, so if he struggles or you're not immediately able to identify a foreign object, stop and proceed directly to the nearest veterinarian.

If you can easily see the object, remove it. However, if the object appears to be string, yarn or tinsel, do not attempt to pull it from your cat's mouth. "If a linear object has been swallowed, it may have trailed down the intestinal tract," Dr. Fletcher says. "Pulling these objects can cause the intestines to tear or rupture, leading to life-threatening infection in the abdomen. These animals should be taken to the nearest veterinarian immediately."

Wheezing Sound. If the sounds your cat makes change from coughing and gagging to a gasping, wheezing sound known as a stridor, it's a sign he's unable to get full breaths of air. He may collapse, become unconscious and even stop breathing.

If your cat is unconscious, Dr. Fletcher recommends that you open the mouth, pull the tongue out past the canine teeth and look down the throat. If you see a foreign object such as a piece of kibble, remove it with your fingers or tweezers. "But if the object is stuck and there is resistance to removal, it should not be forced out," Dr. Fletcher says. "Regardless of whether an object is found and removed, any pet who collapses should be taken to the closest veterinary clinic, even if his condition improves."

Call the clinic to let the staff know you're en route so they can be ready.



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A good rule of thumb to prevent choking: Keep sewing materials out of reach.

Because cats depend upon air movement into their lungs to cool them, they can quickly overheat if they have airway obstructions. Keep the car cool and avoid wrapping your cat in a blanket — transport him in a carrier.

The veterinarian will do an initial assessment of your cat's airway, breathing and circulation. If your cat isn't breathing and doesn't have a heartbeat, cardiopulmonary resuscitation will be started to restore blood flow and deliver oxygen to vital organs.

If the obstruction is severe, your cat will be sedated and an endotracheal tube will be placed into the airway to provide air flow to the lungs. If the object has been swallowed, surgical removal may be necessary.

"Anytime a cat is choking, he should be seen by the closest available veterinarian immediately," Dr. Fletcher says. "Apparent choking is often due to other processes such as lung or heart disease, infections, or inflammation of the airways that can impede breathing and can rapidly progress to become life threatening." ♦

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- ◆ Keep small, shiny objects, such as earrings and necklaces that may attract cats, in drawers out of paws' reach.
- ◆ If you enjoy sewing or knitting, store needles and other materials in a cat-proof container.
- ◆ Consider taking a pet first-aid course to know what to do in an emergency when minutes count.

ANXIETY ... (continued from cover)

Food. "This [therapeutic] diet contains ingredients like L-tryptophan and alpha-casozepine that might help ease separation anxiety," says Dr. Houpt.

Strong Bonds. Cats have an unfounded reputation as solitary creatures. As most owners know, cats form strong bonds with their human family. "When he was 10 years old, my cat Indy would predictably develop a case of diarrhea whenever I was away on a trip," Dr. Houpt says. "He eliminated on chairs, beds — basically everywhere. Within a few trips, I figured it out: Indy had separation anxiety."

Cats seem to think of humans as their mothers, as evidenced by the way they purr in our presence and tread on us, Dr. Houpt says. "So yes, separation anxiety in cats does occur, and many more cats may have it than we realize."

Unlike in dogs, separation anxiety does not occur with greater frequency in rescue cats. "Separation anxiety occurs equally among genders, as well as when other cats are present," Dr. Houpt says. Owners may even be unaware that it is occurring while they are away. But whether they show it or not, our cats do miss us when we're gone."

Cats may live trouble-free for years and then suddenly develop symptoms

when their owner's work schedule changes or a family member departs. Vacations are perhaps the most common trigger.

Separation anxiety in cats is less noticeable than in dogs. "Cats are smaller so they tend to wreak less havoc," says Dr. Houpt. "Even loud meowing is quieter than barking."

A new therapeutic diet, available only from veterinarians, contains ingredients intended to help ease separation anxiety.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

When Dr. Katherine Houpt's cat, Indy, developed separation anxiety when she was away on trips, hiring an overnight cat sitter was a simple, effective solution. Indy lived happily until the age of 16 with no further problems. "In other cases, anti-anxiety or anti-depression medications, such as clomipramine (Clomicalm), can help," Dr. Houpt says. "These are available via prescription from the veterinarian. However, owners should note that medications often take several weeks to have an effect."

Other tactics that may provide a calming effect:

- ◆ Collars, plug-in diffusers or sprays that dispense Feliway, a synthetic feline facial pheromone.
- ◆ Treat-dispensing balls and other toys that cats can play with alone, which you provide when you're leaving.
- ◆ Behavior modification techniques, including performing leave-taking activities such as picking up keys without leaving. "Upon departing, don't say good-bye to your cat. Just leave without fanfare," Dr. Houpt says.

Treat-dispensing toys can provide entertainment and nourishment to calm cats while they're alone.

One option that will probably not work is getting another cat. "Then you might end up with two destructive pets instead of one," Dr. Houpt says. "Single cats tend to be more problem free."

Another technique that doesn't work is punishment. "Cats won't connect their behavior with the punishment unless you catch them in the act," Dr. Houpt says. "You may end up making the behavior worse."



Bonnie Baker

A Common Sign. House soiling, as Indy did, particularly on the owner's bed and other possessions, is a common manifestation of feline separation anxiety — even among litter box-trained cats. The familiar scent of a cat's deposits comforts him, reducing stress. Other signs include scratching furniture and continual meowing.

Before attempting to treat behavioral problems, it's important to rule out medical problems, Dr. Houpt says. "Should a cat exhibit house-soiling behavior, your veterinarian must first determine whether your cat has bladder, kidney or gastrointestinal issues."

Because every feline is unique, consult your cat's veterinarian for a complete assessment and a behavior modification program. Most important, says Dr. Houpt, recognize that separation anxiety is a form of grief. "Your cat is not behaving destructively or being vindictive. He's not trying to 'get you back' for leaving. He's simply panicked and desperate. We sometimes have owners set up a camcorder while they're away. They may react more empathetically when they see that frantic cat for themselves." ♦

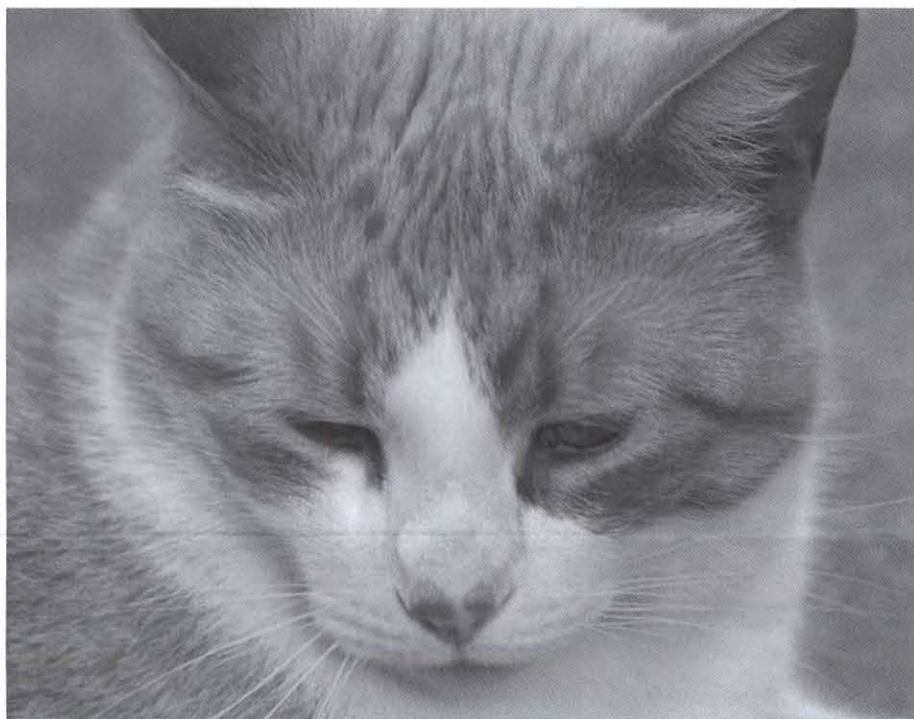
IBD ... (continued from cover)

digestion and absorption of food is impaired.

"Cats suffering from IBD tend to become more lethargic, sleep more, do not act like themselves, lose weight and experience vomiting, diarrhea and have a decrease in appetite," Dr. Wakshlag says. "They are just not acting like their perky selves or greeting you like they used to. It becomes a messy problem in some cats with such irritable bowels that they experience uncontrollable diarrhea in or outside the litter box."

Some cats with IBD can also suffer vitamin B12 deficiency. B12 is a major factor for red blood synthesis and deficiency of this vitamin can lead to mild anemia and weight loss. Some cats may display symptoms intermittently or be mistakenly assumed to be trying to hack up hairballs.

Ruling Out Causes. Although cats of any age can be affected, middle-aged or older cats are more susceptible to IBD. "We don't know what causes IBD, so when a cat is having uncontrollable diarrhea, vomiting and acting lethargic, we start ruling out possible causes such as parasites and cancer, and we back our way into diagnosing IBD," Dr. Wakshlag says. "What we do know with certainty is that cats with IBD have gastrointestinal discomfort and there is constant inflammation in their intestinal walls."



Along with gastrointestinal symptoms, cats with inflammatory bowel disease will be listless, sleeping more, eating less and losing weight.

If your cat is exhibiting these symptoms, his veterinarian will most likely perform a series of diagnostic tests to rule out other conditions, such as feline leukemia virus, feline infectious peritonitis, feline immunodeficiency virus, or parasites and protozoal infections. The tests may include a complete blood cell count, a fecal examination for the presence of parasitic and bacterial agents, and abdominal X-rays and ultrasound.

However, the definitive diagnosis is achieved by the use of an endoscope, a flexible tube with optical fibers that obtains images of the cat's stomach and intestinal tract. "Your vet may want to perform an endoscopy to look at your cat's stomach, small intestine and colon and take small surface biopsies of the stomach or intestine to confirm the diagnosis," Dr. Wakshlag says.

Nutritional Plan. Once IBD has been identified, the best treatment for most cats involves managing their diets and/or administering oral prednisolone. The nutritional game plan calls for switching to a novel protein diet, such as therapeutic commercial diets containing ostrich, bison or duck, to address possible food allergies. The new diets must be introduced gradually to avoid additional GI upset.

"Switching to a novel protein diet won't cure the affected cats, but in 40 to 60 percent of the cases, they will have good digestive function," says Dr. Wakshlag. "There is also the hydrolyzed protein diet option."

THE COMMON TYPES OF IBD

No matter the type, inflammatory bowel disease creates havoc in your cat's gastrointestinal tract. The primary types of IBD include:

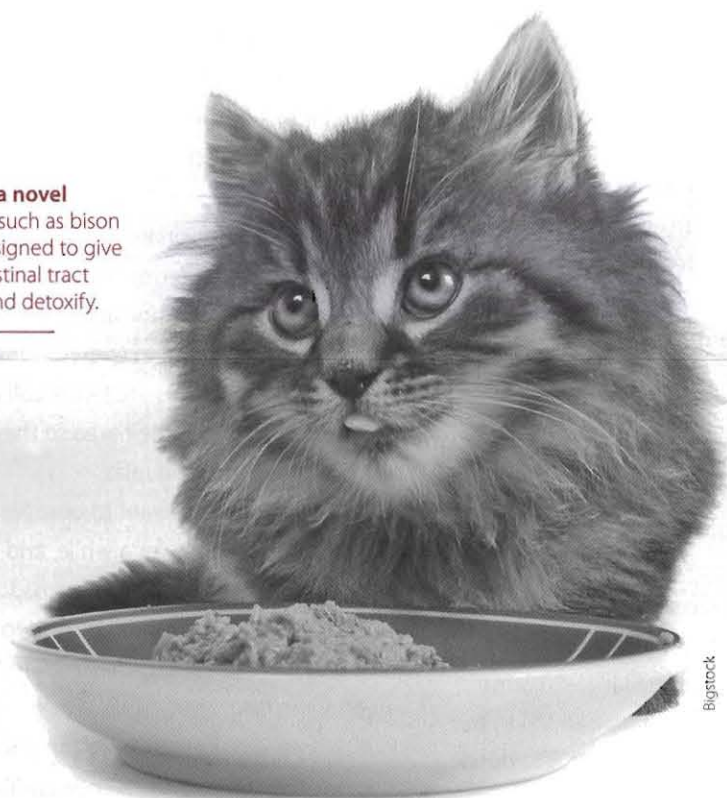
◆ **Lymphocytic-plasmacytic enterocolitis:** This most common form is identified via a biopsy revealing the presence of excessive numbers of lymphocytes and plasma cells on the small intestine or colon.

◆ **Eosinophilic enterocolitis:** This is one of the most challenging forms of IBD. Eosinophils — small, granular white blood cells in bone marrow that control allergic and inflammatory responses — will be present in the stomach, small intestine or colon.

Hydrolyzed proteins are broken down into minuscule particles too tiny to trigger a response from the cat's immune system. Major commercial pet food companies market these diets directly to veterinarians.

"People often try the novel food approach first because it is easy," says Dr. Wakshlag. "Sometimes, switching to a more digestible food with a better fiber matrix can help a cat get better."

Switching to a novel protein food such as bison or rabbit is designed to give the gastrointestinal tract time to heal and detoxify.



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INTRODUCING A NOVEL PROTEIN FOOD

Some cats fed the same commercial diet of, say, lamb and rice or salmon may have developed food allergies, triggering inflammatory bowel disease. Switching to a novel protein diet, also known as an elimination diet, is designed to give your cat's gastrointestinal tract time to heal and detoxify. The ingredients in the novel diet also help keep your cat's immune system from overreacting to allergens.

The novel proteins must be sources your cat has not previously eaten, perhaps bison, ostrich, rabbit or even kangaroo. Your cat's veterinarian will recommend how to gradually introduce the diet and monitor his acceptance.

Once your cat is on the new diet and IBD symptoms have subsided, the veterinarian may have you reintroduce certain foods to him again — one at a time. This will help determine if your cat's gastrointestinal upset is due to a reaction to certain foods.

"If you put your cat on a novel protein or hydrolyzed diet and he gets better, then the challenge is to gradually reintroduce the old food. If the diarrhea and vomiting return, you've figured out your problem," says nutritionist Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., at Cornell.

He adds that it's important to work closely with your cat's veterinarian to identify a novel protein diet or use a hydrolyzed protein diet to ensure the greatest success in your cat.

The corticosteroid prednisolone currently ranks as the go-to drug in easing symptoms associated with IBD. "We know the dose and how to use it judiciously," Dr. Wakshlag says. "At Cornell, we often get the most severe cases of cats and dogs with IBD. It is important to give prednisolone to cats orally for the most effective administration. Most cats do fine on prednisolone and it is the cheapest drug option."

Risk of Infection. However, he cautions against its long term use. Prednisolone can cause insulin resistance and lead to diabetes mellitus, and if a cat is on the medication and gets bitten, there is a greater risk for bacterial infection. Prednisolone also suppresses the body's natural cortisol secretion; therefore, it's always important to taper cats off prednisolone to allow your cat's system to start making his own steroids again."

Corticosteroids fight inflammation, stimulate the appetite and enhance water absorption. Other drugs used with some success are chlorambucil, another immunosuppressant, and antibiotics.

Thanks to advances in veterinary diagnostic tools, especially the endoscope, more cats are being properly diagnosed with IBD, Dr. Wakshlag says. "My take-home message to owners is that sometimes the introduction of a novel protein or hydrolyzed diet — coupled with the right medication — can show results within a few days. Cats with IBD feel miserable, but with the right treatment plan, most can experience a livable outcome." ♦

For more information on inflammatory bowel disease, please visit the Cornell Feline Health Center at <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/brochures/ibd.html>



Elizabeth

Elizabeth is thankful for the assistance of **Bruce G. Kornreich, DVM, Ph.D., DACVIM**, Associate Director of the Cornell Feline Health Center, in providing the answer on this page.

**PLEASE
SHARE YOUR
QUESTIONS**

We welcome questions on health, medicine and behavior, but regret that we cannot comment on prior diagnoses and specific products. Please write CatWatch Editor, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT, 06854 or email catwatcheditor@cornell.edu.

COMING UP ...

❖
**DESTRUCTIVE
CHEWING**

❖
PET TRUSTS

❖
**BEST FOOD
FOR KITTENS**

❖
**PANLEUKOPENIA
VIRUS**

Q A friend has had two cats for several years and will be bringing in a service dog for a family member. My friend is looking for the best way to handle the situation. One concern is that the cats may run away. Can you advise her on how to handle this adjustment as smoothly as possible?

A First, I think it is great that your friend is taking advantage of the joy that a service dog can bring into people's lives, and I want to give a shout out to my dedicated canine friends and the wonderful people who work so hard to make their mission possible. These dogs are awesome and are, for the most part, very carefully screened with respect to behavior, so I doubt there will be any problems with the dog having difficulty with the cats. It wouldn't hurt, however, to speak with the foundation providing the dog to see if it has advice regarding the introduction.

With respect to the kitties' adjusting to their new housemate, I would recommend that she first make sure everyone's nails have been trimmed to minimize the possibility of the kitties injuring the dog. Sharp cat nails can be very damaging to a dog's face, particularly to a dog's eyes. We don't want the service dog needing a service dog! The other issue is the possibility of my feline friends running away. Here at the Feline Health Center, we highly recommend keeping cats indoors. If the kitties are kept indoors, they can't run away!

To make the introduction less emotionally stressful for her cats, I suggest your friend obtain a piece of material or another object with the dog's scent on it before the introduction and put it in the house, so that the kitties can become accustomed to this new scent. After allowing several days to a week for this acclimation, she can consider their actually meeting.

I would recommend having the dog on a leash during introductions, so that your friend can control the situation. If possible, making the introduc-

tion through a barrier, such as a screen door or baby gate, allows visual and olfactory contact and may minimize stress to the cats. It is also important that she provide an escape route in case they feel threatened — cornered kitties are dangerous kitties. A means to get away can be as simple as a path to another room or a perching site such as a kitty condo or counter.

It's best to allow the cats to approach the dog and provide positive enforcement, such as praise and treats, for appropriate interaction. Maintaining a calm demeanor in terms of body position and tone of voice is also important. Both cats and dogs can sense and feed off an owner's tension. If your friend senses her kitties are tense, call it a day, and remove the dog from their area so they can recover their composure and relax.

The kitties may just want to observe their new friend from a distance for a while, and this is OK. She should be sure they have access to their food, water and litter pan without having to travel through an area in which they may feel threatened by the dog. She should also spend a lot of quality time with her kitties to provide emotional support. The critical issue is to keep things positive and safe for all involved. Your friend should not get between the cats and the dog if the cats become agitated, as she may end up being bitten or scratched, and we don't want that happening.

I think that, with patience, your friend can make this transition without too much trouble, but the time this may take can vary considerably, depending upon the individual. If these suggestions are not successful, your friend may want to consider consulting a veterinary behaviorist, who may recommend other tactics, such as the use of synthetic feline hormones that tend to calm kitties, or in very extreme cases, medications that may be used to calm frantic felines. ❖

— Best regards, Elizabeth

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