



Cornell University  
College of Veterinary Medicine



# DOG Watch

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

Vol. 18, No. 5 ♦ May 2014

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Coco Rose arrived spinning and hasn't stopped. Except now, she spins for joy.

## IN THE NEWS ...

### \$5 Million Pledged for Bone Cancer Research

Osteosarcoma strikes more than 10,000 dogs each year in the U.S. Amputation is the usual treatment for the bone cancer, followed by what the Morris Animal Foundation calls some of the most toxic chemotherapy in veterinary medicine.

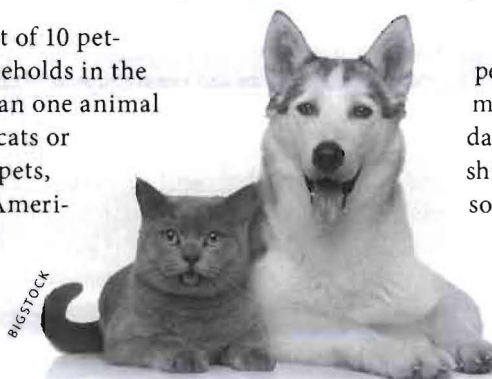
To fight the disease, which especially affects large breeds, the foundation has launched Project 5-5-5. The initiative will fund one \$1-million osteosarcoma clinical trial annually for five years. First on the agenda: an evaluation of the drug rapamycin. The immunosuppressant is used in organ transplants to prevent rejection of foreign tissue.

Rapamycin also has antibiotic and antifungal capabilities, and has been shown to prevent the growth of canine melanoma and osteosarcoma in vitro, the foundation says. It launched the research project to find "safer, more efficacious treatments" and ultimately save the lives of both dogs and humans. More than 2,000 human cases are diagnosed annually in the U.S., with young people 10 to 19 commonly affected. ♦

## Peace and Harmony Among Pets

*It depends on identifying and solving conflicts, whether they're food, toys or — you guessed it — your attention*

Nearly four out of 10 pet-owning households in the U.S. have more than one animal — multiple dogs, cats or a variety of other pets, according to the American Pet Products Association. No matter the combination, the potential for conflict always exists, especially with different species whose biological and behavioral imperatives run counter to each other.



*They aren't natural soul mates but sometimes can learn to be best friends.*

However, keeping multiple pets also confers benefits. Animals home alone during the day usually like companionship, and the resident pet can sometimes be a role model for the newcomer, helping him learn household rules.

### Social vs. Solitary.

While cats and dogs can learn to live in peace, they aren't natural soul mates. Cats tend to be loners, and dogs are social, for one thing. And while both are predators, some

*(continued on page 4)*

## Coming to Terms With Kidney Disease

*While research continues on new treatments, special renal diets have been shown to help increase longevity*

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a progressive condition common in older dogs. It worsens at varying rates, and because it has no cure, owners coping with CKD need to understand and come to terms with the complexity of the disease, as well as its options for treatment.

"The first thing I tell owners is, 'The disease is chronic, we're not going to cure it, and I don't know how quickly it will progress,'" says Catherine Cortright, DVM, a resident in companion animal internal medicine at the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. While some dogs diagnosed with the disease might deteriorate quickly and die within months or even weeks, others can live up to four years after diagnosis.

**Decreasing Protein.** "The only treatment that has been shown to slow the disease's progression is a special diet," Dr. Cortright says. "Diet doesn't treat the disease process, but presumably the combination of the decreased protein, decreased phosphorus and omega 3 fatty acid supplementation helps slow the progression. The outcome, which has been shown scientifically, is that dogs on the renal diet have longer survivals. We don't know what aspect of the diet is most important in prolonging the survival or why."

Many drugs are available to treat the diseases' symptoms — such as nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, high blood pressure

*(continued on page 6)*



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**DogWatch** (ISSN: 1098-2639) is published monthly for \$39 per year by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1631. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation. ©2014 Belvoir Media Group, LLC.

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## SHORT TAKES

### 'Trying to Fit a Big Foot into a Small Shoe'

A study from the University of Surrey in the U.K. has revealed the effects of the condition called Chiari malformation (CM) prevalent in some toy dogs developed to have doll-like faces.

CMs are structural abnormalities in the cerebellum, the area of the brain controlling balance. Normally, along with parts of the brain stem, it's at the back of the skull, above the opening to the spinal canal. When part of the cerebellum is below the opening, it's a Chiari malformation. Several types of the defect also occur in humans. In essence, overcrowding results from a big brain and a small skull.

"Chiari malformation can be described as trying to fit a big foot into a small shoe," says neurologist Clare Rusbridge, BVMS, Ph.D., the study's lead author. "It can be very painful, causing headaches and pressure on the brain and can result in fluid-filled cavities in the spinal cord."

Affected breeds can also develop paralysis and balance problems. Especially vulnerable are Griffon Bruxellois (known Brussels Griffon in the U.S.), Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Chihuahuas and their crosses.

In the study, published in the journal PLOS One, researchers took brain scans and measurements of the brain, skull and vertebrae of 155 Griffons. They compared dogs affected by CM to normal dogs with mesocephalic, or moderate, skull shapes — a Beagle, two Australian Terriers and three Affenpinschers, toy breeds genetically close to the Griffon. They found dogs with CM had taller foreheads, which caused the shape of their brain to change. The cerebellum of severely affected Griffons had been pushed under the main part of the brain.

However, the researchers caution that CM is complex and "multifactorial" in nature and "cannot be explained by a simple defect in the development of a single skull bone," adding that it may involve other factors not covered in their study.

They do hope their discovery will help other researchers identify genes that may be



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**Brussels Griffon are especially vulnerable** to structural defects in the cerebellum, the part of the brain that controls balance.

associated with the condition, Dr. Rusbridge says. Her team is working with geneticists at the University of Montreal in the hope that better understanding of CM will lead to improved treatment for both dogs and humans.

### Bringing Canine Comfort

A German Shepherd Dog mix has been named the first National Weather Therapy Dog to visit schools, hospitals and other locations in communities hard hit by natural disasters. The Weather Channel and American Humane Association searched shelters around the nation to find 2-year-old Butler in Charlotte, N.C.

He's described as attentive, well-mannered and energetic, the perfect qualities for an animal-assistance dog to bring comfort to individuals, families and communities in times of disaster, the association says.

"We searched far and wide for a dog who met the criteria to become our network's severe weather therapy dog, and we fell in love with Butler," says David Clark, the network president. "As the number of families affected by severe weather continues to grow each year, the Weather Channel is happy to welcome Butler, who will help bring joy to these families in their time of need." ♦

**Butler has been named** a National Weather Therapy Dog.



AMERICAN HUMANE ASSOCIATION



# Be on the Lookout for Nail Injuries

*They may seem minor but can lead to serious complications such as infection*

At some point in time, your dog might tear a nail. The injury is one of the top 10 pet accidents requiring veterinary care, according to a review of thousands of claims by Veterinary Pet Insurance. And it can happen in a flash.

"The claw gets caught in material like a rug, plant or crack between the boards of a deck, and the animal tries to extract it, or makes a sudden turn without recognizing that one of his claws is caught — resulting in a torn claw, or avulsion," says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, Medical Director of the Cornell University Companion Animal Hospital. Another common cause is nail clipping — even a small movement of the paw during a session can cause a claw to tear.

While any age or breed of dog can injure a claw, "Those with overlong claws are more prone to an avulsion," says Dr. Miller. Nail injuries are also most common in active dogs, often resulting from a claw snagging while the dog is running.

**Weak Claws.** In addition, Dr. Miller says, "If the animal has a localized claw disease, such as ringworm, that claw is much more easily damaged. And although rare, some systemic diseases or congenital hereditary conditions like hypothyroidism, nutritional deficiency or primary seborrhea (causing scaly, itchy skin) can result in weakness of all the claws, making both skin lesions and claw damage more likely. Yet another hereditary condition in dogs, called symmetrical lupoid onychodystrophy, results in diseased claws on all four feet, although the rest of the dog is normal."

Serious complications sometimes result from nail injuries. "A torn claw is painful," Dr. Miller says. "Often the claw isn't ripped off entirely but is attached to the non-avulsed portion near the base of

the claw. Every time the avulsed portion is pulled, banged or bumped, more pain is added to the picture. Rarely, the trauma to the caught claw is so intense that the bone beneath the claw is fractured, which is excruciatingly painful. When the claw is avulsed, the claw bed is left without its protective claw covering. If the injury is ignored, the exposed claw bed can bleed and become infected." Should this happen, Dr. Miller says, "The infection can get into the bone, and become an entirely different and more serious issue."

**Home Remedies.** Owners can sometimes remedy a torn nail at home. If some of the claw is still attached, it's necessary to clip it off to prevent further discomfort. "If the animal isn't in too much pain, the owner may be able to do this," says Dr. Miller. "If the claw is torn off entirely, but again, the animal isn't in too much pain, lightly bandaging that foot will protect the claw bed from additional damage during the healing process."

The wound should be monitored and the bandage changed frequently. If the wound looks unhealthy or begins to



DR. WILLIAM H. MILLER

Any age or breed of dog can tear a nail, but those with overlong claws are more prone.

smell bad, indicating infection, a trip to the veterinarian is warranted for an examination.

"If there is any evidence of significant discomfort, don't try these remedies at home — you may get bitten," Dr. Miller says. "Regardless of how simple the claw damage looks, if the animal is in pain, leave the treatment to your dog's veterinarian."

If the foot is especially painful, the veterinarian may administer a local anesthesia or tranquilization. He or she will then remove the damaged portion of the claw and may bandage the foot for a brief period, prescribe antibiotics to treat any infection that might develop, and prescribe pain medications or antiseptics as needed. Expect mild bleeding from the injured area during the 24 hours after the procedure. Pain and swelling should begin to diminish within two days, and within a few weeks, the nail should begin to re-grow.

With good treatment, the prognosis for a torn nail is excellent: the vast majority of dogs with injured nails make complete recoveries. Sometimes, however, the damage results in irregular future nail growth, which may require more frequent trimming of that nail.

Although claw injuries can't be entirely prevented, you can take steps to decrease the risk. Be aware of your dog's surroundings to avoid potential claw-snagging situations, supervise his physical activity, keep his nails well trimmed, and exercise caution when clipping those nails. ♦

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Signs of a seriously torn nail include:

- ◆ Yelping upon injury
- ◆ A swollen paw or toe
- ◆ Limping or avoiding stepping on one paw
- ◆ Blood spots on floors, carpets or the dog's bedding
- ◆ Constant licking of one paw
- ◆ Sensitivity of the affected paw; the dog may resist attempts to examine it.



**MULTIPLES...** *(continued from the cover)* dogs view cats as prey and chase them to the detriment of the cat's comfort.

The most common conflicts involve miscommunication between species (the dog wants to play; the cat is afraid) and owner-derived resources, such as food, toys and attention.

Even though they have differences, most pets coexist happily when owners understand their behaviors and meet their needs. The first thing to determine is whether your dog

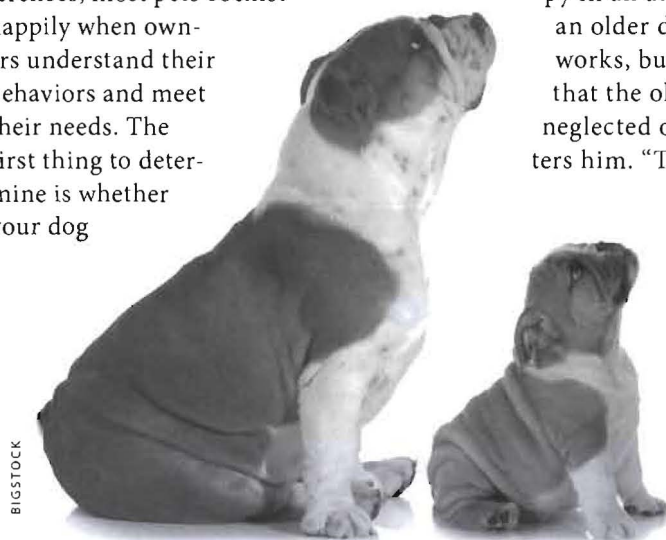
really needs a companion. Dogs can enjoy having a pal, says behaviorist Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., professor emeritus at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, but problems arise when they're members of the same species with incompatible activity levels.

Owners often will get a puppy in an attempt to rejuvenate an older dog. Sometimes that works, but it's more likely that the older dog becomes neglected or the puppy pesters him. "The worst mistake people make is to have a small old dog and then get a large-breed puppy," Dr. Houpt says.

**Struggle for Dominance.** "At first the puppy drives the older dog crazy, and then as the younger dog realizes his own size, you may have a dominance struggle. If you're going to get a second dog, it would be better to get one of the opposite sex and smaller adult size."

The ideal number of your pack or pride: It's best if there's no more than one dog per adult in the household, Dr. Houpt says. That way, no dog suffers for lack of attention. "One cat per household is ideal from the cat's point of view," she says. "Of course, I probably wouldn't have much business if people followed that rule."

Smoothing raised hackles and ruffled fur calls for a number of tactics: training, modifying behavior, separating the combatants and providing adequate resources.



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**Getting a puppy to help rejuvenate an older dog?** Sometimes that works. More likely the older dog becomes neglected or the puppy pesters him.

## EIGHT STEPS TO INTRODUCING NEWCOMERS — WE DIDN'T SAY IT WAS GOING TO BE EASY

With time and patience, you can introduce new pets — cats or dogs — gradually and safely, with a minimum of stress for all involved.

### To introduce the cat to the dog

1. Isolate a new cat for three days to a week in a room with a litter box, soft bed, food and water. That gives him time to become accustomed to the home's smells and sounds before encountering the resident dog.
2. After the isolation period, let the cat explore the house while the dog is outdoors, confined to a crate or restrained by a leash.
3. Set up a situation in which the animals can see each other without physical contact. This can be done by separating them with a glass or screen door or setting up a see-through barrier such as two baby gates on top of each other. This separation period should also last three to seven days.
4. During this time, feed them within view of each other. You want them to get used to good things happening in each other's presence.

5. When you bring the animals together, the dog should be on leash so you can control playful or predatory lunges. Give them both treats as long as they are reacting calmly.

### To introduce the new dog to another dog

1. Let them meet first outdoors on neutral territory, both on leashes each held by a separate person. Give each dog some squeeze cheese or other treat before they have a chance to interact. This will help them associate each other with good things.
2. Let them sniff each other briefly, being alert to signs of aggression or fear, such as staring, pulling the lips back, raising the ears, and holding the tail stiff and high.
3. Walk the dogs separately for a few minutes, then reunite them for more sniffs and treats. When their greetings are friendly and accepting, you know it's time for them to go home.



### **Access to the Owner: Spread the Love Around**

Your dog may be used to having your lap all to himself — until the pushy new puppy or demanding cat topples him from his throne. If this is the case, pet the original pet or let him sit on your lap first. When you pet another animal, give him treats or talk to him. If you have other family members, enlist them in giving pets their fair share of attention.

If you have dogs, engage them in fun activities together, Dr. Houpt says. Take them on walks at the same time. Give them treats at the same time. You want them to associate each other with good times. If you have cats, spend playtime with them together; this can engender friendliness between them, but meals and lap time should be one cat at a time.

### **Take the Issue of the Litter Box — Please!**

Some dogs like to raid the box in search of “treats,” and neither cat nor owner appreciates it. If you have a small dog, getting a covered litter box doesn’t help, Dr. Houpt says. He can still fit his head — or his entire body — inside. Some cats do not like covered boxes, but if the box is large enough and cleaned often enough, there is usually no problem. “You have to figure out a way to give the cat access to the litter box without the dog getting to it,” she says. “I have a barrier like a baby gate that the cat can get over but the dog, who is pretty lazy, can’t.”

### **Minimizing Skirmishes Over the Food Bowl**

Dogs are more likely to guard their food than cats and may take exception

to a cat walking nearby, even if the cat has no interest in the dog’s food. The key to preventing problems is to feed everyone separately, Dr. Houpt says. “You should never feed two dogs in the same room. Even if they seem to get along fine, it’s a bit of a strain, so always feed them in separate rooms with the door closed between them if you can. Or feed one dog in his crate, but it’s better if they’re out of eyesight.”

In her home, Dr. Houpt feeds her cat on a table — not the dining room table — so the dog can’t get to the food. It’s not only to protect his waistline from expansion. He could become sick if he eats cat food, she says, because he must eat a low-protein diet.

### **Then There’s the Classic Dog vs. Cat Conflict**

Chasing cats is an instinctive behavior in dogs. It’s best if you raise a puppy with a cat from an early age, but if that didn’t happen in your household, you can still try some techniques to teach your dog that cats — indoors or outdoors — are off limits.

Try reintroducing the dog and cat as if they were new to each other (see

sidebar on Page 4). Teach your dog to always come when called so you can stop chases, and as a last resort, keep the dog and cat separated.

It’s also essential that your cat have avenues of escape, such as a tall cat tree or furniture he can run under and the dog can’t. And while you can’t train a cat to hold his ground when a dog is running toward him, a cat who does so often puts an end to the chase. Without motion to stimulate them, many dogs look for more interesting prey.

### **Managing Resources: They Don’t Like to Share**

It’s important for each pet to have space and resources he can call his own: multiple food and water dishes, multiples of favorite toys and multiple beds. Dogs probably do not demand absolute equality in toys so different colors or types can be used to make it easier to determine which ball is Fido’s and which is Rover’s. If they still quarrel, it may be necessary to play with each dog separately.

When the pets aren’t playing with their toys, it’s wise to pick them up and store them, and always leave them stored when you leave home. You can have separate boxes for each dog’s toys.

Bed privileges are a little more complicated. “The bed can be a problem if the original pet has slept on the bed and the new one wants to,” Dr. Houpt says. “You may end up with a dog or catfight on your bed. You have to decide who you want to have bed privileges. You can have one dog on one side and one on the other, or even one dog in his dog bed and another on your bed. Dogs on beds are a personal issue, unless they are aggressive in which case they must sleep elsewhere.”

Most important, Dr. Houpt says, consider the quality of life for the original animal before you fill your house with pets, although having a small herd of happy, friendly animals greeting you when you come home warms the heart. ♦



**The food bowl** can be a frequent source of potential conflict, as are bed privileges.

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# KIDNEY ... (continued from the cover)

and anemia — but they don't treat the underlying kidney disease.

Kidneys are responsible for removing waste and toxins from the body. When they become weakened or fail, wastes and toxins can start to accumulate in the blood and cause severe complications.

The kidneys are susceptible to many disorders leading to kidney failure, also known as renal failure. "Acute" renal failure refers to a relatively sudden onset of problems in the kidneys, which can be caused by extreme dehydration, blockages or the ingestion of poisons, such as antifreeze or rodenticides. If recognized quickly, kidney damage from acute renal failure is potentially reversible.

Chronic kidney disease, on the other hand, is an incurable condition that builds gradually, often over many months or even years. The cause is usually unknown, but generally CKD is a result of damage to or degenera-

tion of the renal tubules. Many health problems can lead to CKD, including birth defects, bacterial infections, high blood pressure or diseases that affect the immune system. But by the time the dog shows signs of kidney disease, the cause might no longer be apparent.

Chronic kidney disease can affect dogs of all ages and breeds. Both male and female dogs appear to be equally susceptible. Certain studies have reported that Samoyeds, Bull Terriers, Cairn Terriers, German Shepherd Dogs and English Cocker Spaniels are more commonly affected than other breeds.

**Early Signs.** Despite the disease's progressing over time, symptoms often seem to appear suddenly. Early signs are increased water consumption and urine production. This is because the kidneys are unable to concentrate the urine properly, resulting in its increased production. Thirst is subsequently increased as the body attempts to keep the dog from becoming

dehydrated due to increased fluid loss in the urine.

Symptoms of more advanced kidney failure include loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, vomiting, diarrhea and very bad breath. Ulcers might also be found in the mouth. However, the condition can be detected before the onset of the symptoms.

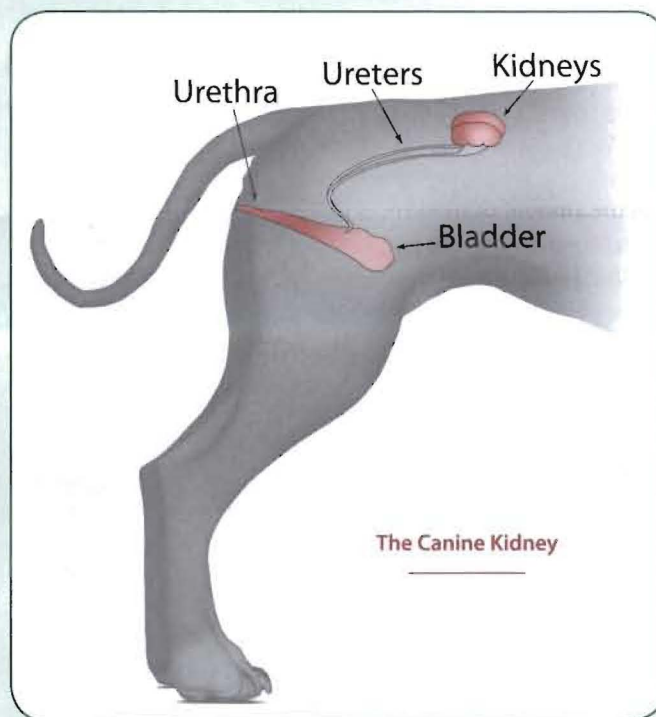
"Typically a veterinarian will catch kidney disease on routine blood work for an older pet," Dr. Cortright says. When certain values in blood work are elevated, kidney disease might be suspected. But further testing needs to be done to rule out other disorders that can elevate those values, such as a urinary tract infection or help determine its severity.

Once diagnosed, the outcome is far from certain. In many cases, renal function will stabilize for weeks or even months at a time. Although kidney function will continue to deteriorate, symptoms can often be improved with supportive care.

## HOW THE KIDNEYS WORK

A dog's kidneys play a vital role in many bodily functions. They help control blood pressure, regulate the blood volume and produce a variety of hormones and enzymes. They serve as filters for the body by removing waste substances and toxins from the blood.

Each kidney contains hundreds of thousands of tiny filtration units called nephrons. Blood enters the kidneys through the renal artery and then moves through progressively smaller vessels until it reaches the nephrons, which then filter the blood through microscopic structures called glomeruli. The filtered blood then circulates back to the heart. The waste removed by the kidneys is passed along as urine through tubules in the kidneys and then to the bladder to be eventually excreted.



MARTY BEE





Some studies have identified English Cocker Spaniels, along with Samoyeds, Bull Terriers and German Shepherd Dogs, as being more prone to chronic kidney disease than other breeds.

that owners spend several hundred dollars a month on supportive treatments and special diets.

One of the biggest challenges for owners is acceptance of the implications of a chronic disease. "People always ask, 'Why did this happen?'" Dr. Cortright says. "There is no answer. Chronic kidney disease is a degenerative condition. The owners didn't do anything wrong."

However, through regular veterinary checkups, owners can hope to recognize the signs of CKD early and better control the effects on their dogs. ❖

### TRANSPLANTS CAN REACH \$100,000

Successful kidney transplants have been performed in dogs. However, the procedure — expensive and guarded in its prognosis — is not considered until all other options have been exhausted. Regardless, donor matching and organ rejection prevention are more difficult for dogs than for cats. In addition, the larger the dog, the more expensive the anti-rejection drugs.

The cost of kidney transplantation in dogs is often more than \$15,000. However, when combined with dialysis procedures leading to transplantation and post-surgery medications that must be administered for the remaining life of the animal, the overall cost sometimes approaches \$100,000. Kidney transplants in dogs today are available at a handful of veterinary schools and private animal clinics across the country.

Treatments might include dietary therapy, fluid administration, management of anemia and high blood pressure, and modification of calcium and phosphorus.

Fluid therapy is provided to prevent dehydration due to the large amount of water lost in dilute urine. Subcutaneous (under the skin) fluid delivery might be necessary, and many owners can do this at home after training from the veterinarian. In some cases, IV fluids might also be required.

Feeding a special kidney diet is usually recommended. The diets contain less protein compared to other diets but the protein is high quality. Kidney diets also control the amount of substances that might be too high or too low in patients with CKD, such as phosphorous, salt, potassium, magnesium and B vitamins.

**Seeking Options.** When a dog is diagnosed with a chronic condition like CKD, owners can become desperate for more extreme treatment options. They commonly ask about the possibility of a kidney transplant, Dr. Cortright says. "Yes, there are places that do renal transplants for pets. But whether or not they're a good idea is questionable."

Survival rates for dogs who undergo renal transplants are much lower than

in cats, with only 50 percent surviving two months after the procedure, Dr. Cortright says. Likewise, fewer hospitals perform canine transplants because they are inherently more complicated than in cats.

Hemodialysis for dogs with CKD is another available but rarely practical or affordable option, Dr. Cortright says. In hemodialysis, a catheter attaches the dog to a machine that filters toxins from the blood in the same way a properly functioning kidney would.

At the Animal Medical Center in New York City, the average estimate for the care of a hemodialysis patient is \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the first two to three weeks. The cost is often more justified for cases of acute kidney failure, in which long-term dialysis treatments aren't necessary. But in cases of chronic kidney disease, treatments are necessary for the rest of the dog's life, meaning costs continue to mount, and owners must live near the treatment center for regular visits. Furthermore, dialysis is feasible only for highly tolerant animals who will allow the placement of a catheter and remain still enough for the treatment, Dr. Cortright says.

The costs for treatment can also range widely depending on the disease's progression. Dr. Cortright estimates

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**Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D.,** here with her Cairn Terrier, Denver, provided the answer on this page. Dr. Houpt is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus professor at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

**Please Share Your Questions**  
We welcome questions of general interest on health, medicine and behavior. We regret however, that we cannot comment on specific products and prior diagnoses. Please send correspondence to:

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## COMING UP ...

FEAR  
AGGRESSION



LIVING WITH  
DIABETES



TRACHEAL  
COLLAPSE  
IN TOY BREEDS



YEAST SKIN  
INFECTIONS

## A Rescued Chihuahua-Poodle Persists in Repeated Circling

**Q** Two years ago, I rescued a long-haired chihoodle, Coco Rose, who was extremely skittish. I thought frequent nose-licking, panting and repeated rapid circling were signs of her fearfulness that we addressed with an on-going program of obedience classes, agility and lots and lots of tenderness, love and patience.

The results have been amazing. What a trooper she is! The lizard-licks and panting occur now only when appropriate (at the vet or if she is totally confused about something). However, her circling continues. I am now wondering if her circling indicates something else entirely. She no longer circles under stressful conditions but at joyful times. Mealtimes: round and round. Time for a walk or ride: round and round and round. Also when choosing a place to defecate.

Originally, she circled with head and tail down. Now head and tail are up and she is grinning. How does this expressive behavior originate?

**A** You have done a remarkable job of rehabilitating your chihoodle. Coco Rose is a lucky dog indeed. You are very good at recognizing the signs of anxiety in dogs — panting, nose licking tail down and ears back. Obedience training gives shy dogs the confidence to be happy because they have learned that humans are predictable. Now she thinks to herself, "If I sit, she will praise me and maybe even give me a treat," and, "Agility is so fun because I can run and climb ladders and crawl thorough tunnels on my own and even be rewarded with a big hug at the end of the course."

Despite all her gains, the circling persists. It may be an obsessive compulsive disorder. You did not mention what her history was and you may not know. Dogs who have been confined and neglected often develop these problems because that is the only pleasure they get. Circling is like being on a swing — it stimulates the inner ear, and that may have been the only good thing in her life.

You have really improved her life, and now the first step in dealing with any behavior problem, but

particularly for circling, is to rule out medical problems, such as liver disorders, injury especially to the tail, arthritis or intervertebral

disk disease pain in the back half of the dog.

Causes could also include a variety of neurological problems, such as seizures, vestibular (balance) disorders or even tumors. A frequent cause is dermatological problems, including anal sac disease. I assume your veterinarian has ruled these out as causes.

Recognizing the difference between your dog's circling with tail and ears down and circling with tail and ears up is very astute of you. I think she exhibits this behavior when she is aroused. She once did it because she was aroused and frightened. Now she does it because she is aroused and joyful. Some people jump for joy; she circles for joy. Your dog now circles when she is anticipating something fun like a walk. You could ask her to sit and lie down to interrupt the behavior or you could just ignore it. The circling should gradually decrease in frequency and duration as she continues to live a rich life with a loving owner.

I think that the circling is most apt to be an obsessive compulsive problem. You have already done most of the things we would recommend, such as exercise, a predictable schedule of play and socialization. You have reduced her stress a lot. A variety of drugs have been used successfully to treat obsessive compulsive disorders, but in her case medication is not warranted.

As for her circling before defecating, that, too, may be anticipation of the pleasure of emptying a distended rectum, but there is another possible explanation. Vlastimil Hart, Ph.D., of the Czech University of Life Sciences and his colleagues observed 1,893 defecations by 70 dogs and found that most of the dogs oriented themselves with the earth's magnetic field, so she may just be trying to find true north. (See "Study Suggests Dogs Sense the Earth's Magnetic Field" in the April 2014 issue.)

Continue your good work with Coco Rose. ♦



**Coco Rose arrived at her new home spinning** and hasn't stopped. Except now, she spins for joy.

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