

© THIS JUST IN

Pandemic Pounds

Veterinarians see increase

Nearly 75% of veterinarians believe the pandemic affected pets when it came to weight, according to Hill's Pet Nutrition. You might think pet parents at home would mean more exercise, and maybe it does for some, but it also apparently means more treats for a lot of pets.

"With people spending more time at home over the last nine months, treats are often given as a form of love, with more than half (53%) of pet parents saying they've been giving their pets treats for no reason," according to Hill's.

While 73% of owners feel they can tell if their pets have gained weight or are overweight, veterinarians feel differently. The survey reported that veterinarians only feel that about 12% of pet owners are accurate about their pets' weight.

Is there hope for pudgy pets? Fewer treats, no table scraps, and more exercise could help with weight control. Close to half the owners surveyed said they could, and would, work on their pets' diets.

Planning more exercise in the form of walking dogs is important. Monitoring food intake, including treats, can help. A third of the owners were even willing to cut back on social media screen time to help their pets return to a healthy weight. ■



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The Looming Concern About Copper in Dog Food

Copper overload is quietly killing our dogs

We all know good nutrition is critical for the health and longevity of our dogs, and most of us rely on commercial dog foods to help us achieve that. Now, what if we told you those complete-and-balanced diets—the quality food you've carefully chosen for your dog—may be slowly killing him?

It's true, says Dr. Sharon Center, Emeritus James Law Professor of Internal Medicine at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Center is nationally renowned for her expertise in liver diseases of dogs and cats. She says the excess amount of the essential trace mineral copper in commercial dog food can cause a serious, potentially lethal illness called dietary-induced copper-associated hepatopathy (CAH). The incidence of CAH is increasing at a rate that's causing alarm among veterinarians and dog owners, with one study showing 30% of canine liver biopsies have evidence of CAH.

CAH is no longer considered just a disease of predisposed breeds like Bedlington Terriers, Labrador Retrievers, Dalmatians, Dobermans, and Westies. First, it can happen to any dog, and it is expected to happen more and more if copper levels in dog foods remain too high. Second, it can be actively happening in the liver of a dog showing no outward signs of illness.

Presentation and Progression

Your dog's dietary copper helps make red



Vira's hepatopathy was caught at her annual wellness exam when her ALT showed an ongoing increase. Liver biopsy confirmed the diagnosis.

blood cells and absorb iron. It also functions in the formation of skin and hair pigmentation and connective tissue. A deficiency, though rare, can cause muscular and skeletal problems, so we do need copper in our dog's food.

CAH occurs when the amount of dietary copper ingested exceeds a dog's tolerance level and accumulates in the liver. Once in the liver, it can cause acute, severe liver inflammation with immediate, disastrous consequences, or it can cause chronic, insidious damage over time, resulting in widespread scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) and liver failure.

Symptoms of CAH include:

- ▶ abdominal swelling
- ▶ decreased appetite
- ▶ diarrhea
- ▶ increased thirst
- ▶ jaundice
- ▶ lethargy
- ▶ vomiting

"There is certainly a rise in copper-related hepatopathies these days," says Dr. Joseph J. Wakshlag, Professor of Clinical Nutrition and Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Section Chief of Nutrition, Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "It may very well be related to a lack of safe upper limits of consumption and higher than expected levels in dog foods," he says.

Right now, the recommendation for the amount of copper in a dog food is 7.3 mg/kg (milligrams per kilogram), but

(continues on page 3)

Cornell Margaret and Richard Riney Canine Health Center Launches Accelerated by \$30 million gift from the Riney Family Foundation

A \$30 million gift from Margaret and Richard Riney has endowed the Cornell Margaret and Richard Riney Canine Health Center at the College of Veterinary Medicine to improve the health and well-being of dogs through world-class research, outreach, and engagement with dog lovers. The gift accelerates the center's launch and endows funding critical for advancing canine health-related research and innovations.

"This partnership offers the potential for research advancements that will transform veterinary, and human, medicine for decades to come. Coupled with all of this is a strong educational outreach component, helping dog owners become better stewards of their pets," says Richard Riney, of the Riney Family Foundation.

"We've designed this model to be sustainable, growing, relevant, and uniquely tailored to meet the needs of dog lovers," says David Lee, associate dean for external programs at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "The college has always funded internal projects, and this gift from the Riney Family Foundation will dramatically expand opportunities for our researchers."

The Riney Foundation funding will initially endow a significant internal grants program for canine health-related research, with particular emphasis on studying cancer, genetics and genomics, infectious diseases, and immunology, building on Cornell's current program strengths.

"This gift will allow investigators to design rigorous canine-specific programs without having to sacrifice or forsake important objectives due to budget or staffing constraints," said Dr. Kelly Hume, associate professor of clinical sciences at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "Ultimately, this will allow research and discovery to progress more quickly."

The Cornell Riney Canine Health Center aims to establish itself as the most trusted source for information related to canine health. The center's website will feature useful health-related videos, online seminars, stories, and explainers that address the needs of dog lovers and owners, breeders and veterinary health-care providers. Online venues will be created to facilitate two-way communication between the center's experts and content developers and the public. ■



The center will be tailored to meet the needs of dog lovers, says Dr. David Lee, associate dean for external programs.

Cornell DogWatch

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Valley Fever Is Spreading From West to East

Dogs are susceptible to the disease

Valley fever (coccidioidomycosis) is a potentially deadly disease that occurs when the fungus *Coccidioides immitis* is inhaled. Dogs are especially susceptible to the infection, which usually begins in the lungs. The fungus lives in the soil and is found in every state west of the Mississippi River. It's expected to spread east.

While about 70% of infected dogs can fight the infection on their own, puppies, seniors, and dogs with chronic health conditions are at high risk. A vaccine is undergoing trials in dogs under the direction of Anivive, the University of Arizona Health Services at the College of Medicine Tucson, and the Valley Fever Center for Excellence. Availability is expected in late 2022 or early 2023. ■



We all know how much our dogs enjoy a good dig.

Copper, continued from page 1)

that means little to the average consumer because the copper level is rarely listed on your dog's food label (you can call your dog-food manufacturer and request it). Currently, however, there is no maximum limit for copper in your dog's food. At one point, there was, but that was eliminated when the recommended type of copper used in dog foods was changed to a more bioavailable form. Why the limit was eliminated is not clear, but the results most certainly are.

The Effects of That Decision

Meet Vira, a happy, seemingly healthy 4-year-old, spayed female Labradoodle. Routine blood work performed at her annual wellness exam showed a concerning elevation of her ALT (alanine transaminase), a liver enzyme

The Players

AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials). A non-profit organization consisting of state officials responsible for enforcing state laws regarding the safety of animal feeds. AAFCO does not test, recommend, or approve dog foods. The association has no regulatory authority, only enforcement authority. Most dog food companies include a note on the food label that the product is formulated to meet or exceed AAFCO recommendations for nutrition.

NRC (National Research Council).

This is the operating arm of the NASEM (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine), a congressionally chartered non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide independent scientific evidence and advice for the benefit of society. Reports from the NRC are what the FDA uses to create policies and regulations regarding dog foods.

FDA (Food and Drug Administration).

A federal agency of the Department of Health and Human Services, responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the control and supervision of many marketed products, including animal foods and feed. The FDA is the only one of these three agencies with the power to change regulations regarding the nutritional content of dog foods.

that increases in the presence of liver inflammation or injury. When repeat bloodwork one month later showed an ongoing increase in ALT, Vira underwent liver biopsy surgery. Her biopsies confirmed the presence of excess copper levels in her liver with associated hepatocellular damage or CAH.

Treatment for CAH usually includes administration of an oral copper-chelating agent (a compound that binds to copper to help remove it) called d-penicillamine. Dogs with CAH are also fed a copper-restricted diet to prevent further copper accumulation in the liver. Antioxidants like vitamin E and SAME (S-adenosyl-methionine) are recommended as supplements.

It can take many months of treatment for the liver damage to resolve. Repeat biopsy is the only definitive way to determine how the affected dog is doing. Because this is an expensive proposition—and most of us don't want our dogs undergoing multiple invasive surgical procedures—progress is usually monitored with sequential ALT blood tests. All affected dogs should be fed copper-restricted diets for life, and some dogs will require chronic, low-dose chelation therapy.

Vira has responded favorably to her treatment and her ALT is now normal. She eats a copper-restricted diet called "The Scoop," which is available at www.safedogfood.com. Other commercial options for copper-restricted diets

include Hill's 1/d Liver Care and Royal Canin Hepatic Veterinary Diet (both require approval from your veterinarian).

Getting Help

Dr. Wakshlag says that most of the low-copper commercial foods designed for dogs with liver disease are also protein restricted, which is not appropriate for all CAH cases. "This is where I come in," says Dr. Wakshlag, who offers nutrition services at the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. "Since there are no commercial products available, a home-prepared diet is needed. We have been formulating diets for these copper-related hepatopathies in dogs for nearly 20 years." It's also wise, if you have copper water pipes in your home, to flush the lines for several minutes before filling your dog's water bowl to reduce water copper content.

Electing to have a routine blood chemistry run at Vira's annual wellness exam most likely saved her life. Please consider this relatively inexpensive option for your dog at his or her annual heartworm/tick test.

Dr. Center is relentlessly lobbying the FDA to immediately re-establish maximum-allowed copper levels in commercial dog foods and to reconsider current federal canine dietary copper recommendations, but we all need to make our voices heard (see sidebar) in order to make this an industry-wide change. Please consider helping. ■

What You Can Do: Contact the FDA

Dr. Center asks that if your dog has been diagnosed with copper hepatopathy, please complete the FDA questionnaire at <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/report-problem/how-report-pet-food-complaint>. Ask your veterinarian to do the same, as entries from veterinarians are taken very seriously. You can start by Selecting "Safety Reporting Portal," and identify yourself as a guest. Then select, "Start a New Report."

For a title for your FDA report, Dr. Center recommends "Dog Food Copper Over-Supplementation." Fill out the form to the best of your ability, trying not to leave any entries blank. The entry marked "Problem Summary" is the most important entry, says Dr. Center. Make it clear to the FDA that your dog was affected by copper overdose through dog food and add personal commentary regarding your experience.

For example, you might say: "My dog was impacted by copper-associated hepatopathy thought to be due to over-supplementation of copper in commercial pet food. I implore the FDA to take corrective action to lower the maximum copper concentration in commercial dog food to mitigate this avoidable and potentially fatal illness."

We recommend that you expand this entry with your personal commentary of hardship you endured. Tell them about the expenses you incurred, your dog's illness, the difficulty of the diagnosis and management, and the emotional stress to yourself and your family.

Spontaneous, Nasty Lesions

These skin eruptions could be an autoimmune illness

In an autoimmune disorder, the very cells designed to protect a dog from outside invaders turn rogue and attack the animal's own body. When the disorder affects the outer epidermis and inner dermis of the skin, these layers separate and cause painful, blistering lesions.

As the skin layers separate, blisters and pustules may form in the empty spaces. These fragile areas may break down due to erosions, develop crusts from the debris and fluid, and lead to hair loss in the affected areas. Secondary bacterial infections are common.

Severe, recurrent cases of atopic dermatitis are often a suspected cause, predisposing a dog to autoimmune skin problems. Symptoms usually include itching, sneezing, rashes, watery eyes, and paw chewing. Unfortunately, by the time your dog is definitively diagnosed, the trigger may be long gone, which can make diagnosing and treating these illnesses tricky.

Viruses trigger autoimmune skin conditions in humans but haven't been well documented in dogs. A genetic predisposition, which is known to play a role in human autoimmune disorders, has not been proven in dogs, but it is suspected.

"Superficial pemphigus (see sidebar) is recognized more frequently in some breeds like the Akita," says William H. Miller Jr., VMD, DACVD professor emeritus of medicine, section of dermatology, at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Certain medications may be the

trigger in individual dogs, such as antibiotics like sulfonamide, penicillin, and cephalosporin. For some dogs, topical medications used for external parasite control may trigger the reaction. This includes topical ectoparasitic preparations containing fipronil, amitraz, S-methoprene, dinotefuran, pyriproxyfen, or permethrin. In these cases, stopping the drug may lead to normal skin. Other dogs require treatment to restore and maintain normal skin.

Diagnosis

While autoimmune skin diseases in dogs are not common, they do occur. A thorough history is important to rule out any possible drug-induced conditions. Parasitic conditions should also be eliminated as causes of the skin lesions. If there's still no answer, a skin biopsy—which is the only way to truly diagnose an autoimmune skin problem—may be required.

This can be complicated. The ideal biopsy should capture a vesicle or pustule before it erodes. Unfortunately, these are very delicate lesions and are rarely found intact in time to do a biopsy. Also, any treatment prior to biopsy can skew results.

"Even with my 40 years of experience," says Dr. Miller, "I can't absolutely tell you that your dog has an autoimmune skin disease without the biopsy. This can be expensive. When money is an issue, as it is in many cases, a veterinarian might offer, 'Let's try steroids and see what happens.' If they

don't work well enough, or the lesions come right back after the steroid is stopped, then we'll biopsy. The biggest issue with that approach is that steroids can't be used for 14 to 21 days before the biopsy is taken. Otherwise, the histology will be altered and may lead to an incorrect diagnosis."

Treatment

In general, treatment with a combination of medications gives faster results. With lower doses of individual drugs, the chance of deleterious side effects is decreased. Most protocols start with glucocorticoids (steroids such as prednisone) alone or in combination with strong immunosuppressive medications such as azathioprine or cyclosporine (Atopica).

Steroids are inexpensive and easy for owners to give at home, but they do cause side effects when used long-term, starting with increased drinking and urinating but potentially escalating into problems such as diabetes mellitus, liver disease, and Cushing's disease (iatrogenic hyperadrenocorticism).

Pulse therapy—intermittent administration of large doses—may be advocated with dogs receiving high doses of steroids initially, but then going to periodic dosing as opposed to lower dosages daily. For mild or localized problems, topical steroids or immunomodulators such as tacrolimus (immunomodulators are drugs that help calm the immune system) may be sufficient to hold the disease in remission, at least for a while.

Some dogs will need antibiotics to deal with secondary bacterial infections that thrive in the disrupted skin. Culture and sensitivity to determine the best antibiotic choice is recommended. Dogs with atopy or other allergic dermatitis conditions benefit from having that problem treated concurrently. The same is true for secondary yeast or fungal infections.

Newer areas being explored to treat canine autoimmune skin disease include acupuncture, especially if combined with the use of herbs such as *radix Curcuma wenyujin*, *Tripterygium wilfordii*, *Artemisia annua*, and *Berberis vulgaris*.

Oclacitinib (Apoquel) appears helpful, but more study is required before widespread usage will be recommended. A benefit of oclacitinib is that, in general, side effects are less and safety is higher overall than long term corticosteroids.



Management changes, like walking at dawn or dusk instead of in the midday sun, may need to be made to avoid triggers.

Christina J. Stock

Some dogs will go into remission for variable amounts of time and can be weaned to low levels of medication, or even go off medication for a while. In most instances, the disease will recur.

Dogs with any autoimmune skin disease should avoid exposure to sunlight and ultraviolet radiation. It's preferable to walk your dog early or late in the day and avoid midday sun exposure.

Finally, while it can be tempting

to shampoo your dog, it's best to hold off. "Shampoos have several problems. First, the commercially available ones contain 1% hydrocortisone, which isn't very potent," says Dr. Miller. "The second issue with shampoos is that they can make things worse by the mechanical action needed to apply them and rinse them off. Autoimmune skin is more fragile than normal, and rubbing and rinsing can make it worse." ■

Canine Skin Autoimmune Diseases

Pemphigus foliaceus: About a third of all canine autoimmune disorders are pemphigus, making it the most common dermatological autoimmune disease. With pemphigus foliaceus, symmetrical lesions usually appear on the dog's ears and his face. Hair loss, vesicles, pustules, and erosions with ulcers might be observed. His feet will become affected next and, if it progresses without any treatment, the groin area and trunk may be affected. The pustules tend to be large and fragile. Once they break open, crusted lesions cover the open areas. Dogs with severe cases may lose their appetite and appear depressed. Some dogs will have a fever. It generally first appears in middle-aged dogs but has been diagnosed in dogs of any age. While any dog can develop pemphigus foliaceus, Akitas and Chow Chows are common victims. Other breeds that seem to show a higher incidence include Labrador Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs, English Bulldogs, and Cocker Spaniels.

Pemphigus erythematosus: This disease primarily affects parts of the head such as the nose, face, and ears. It is the mildest form of pemphigus. Collies, German shepherd Dogs, and Shetland Sheepdogs may be predisposed to this skin problem.

Pemphigus vulgaris: This form of pemphigus can be quite painful with ulcers and erosions in the mouth and other mucocutaneous junctions such as near the anus and the vulva.

Pemphigus vegetans: This is the least common member of the pemphigus complex. It produces proliferative lesions, not the erosions and ulcers seen in the other forms.

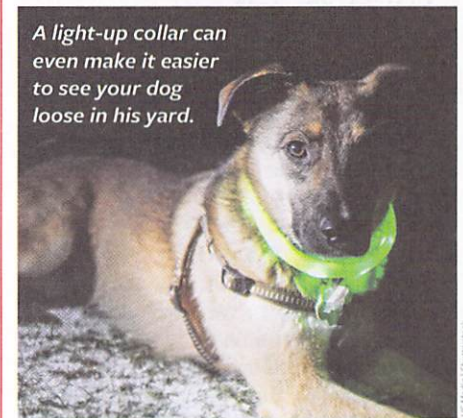
Cutaneous lupus erythematosus: This illness generally starts with lesions on the nose and/or footpads. Both areas lose their normal sort of "roughened" appearance. This is due to the rogue immune cells shoving the normal cells aside. Pigment fades while the areas may become red and irritated. Erosive ulcers follow. While this tends to start on the nose, the lesions may extend up your dog's muzzle into the haired areas. Certain breeds are prone to discoid lupus erythematosus such as German Shepherd Dogs, Siberian Huskies, Collies, and Shetland Sheepdogs. Exposure to UV radiation is considered a trigger. Once a dog is affected, sunlight should be avoided, as it may exacerbate the skin sores. Generally, this is felt to be a fairly benign skin problem.

Systemic lupus erythematosus: In this serious autoimmune condition, the autoantibodies attack many cell types and proteins, not just the ones holding skin cells together. The heart, joints, and kidneys may be involved. Skin signs may be the first warning of a problem with 40% to 50% of the dogs with this autoimmune problem starting with skin lesions. Fever and lameness are common. Breeds with a predisposition include Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, Old English Sheepdog, Afghan Hound, Beagle, Irish Setter, Poodle, Collies, Shetland Sheepdogs, and German Shepherd Dogs.

Bullous pemphigoid: This rare autoimmune skin disease is characterized by large sacks of clear fluid that rupture easily. Dogs with this condition are itchy and may have hives or welts. These blisters are generally found in the skin around the mouth, at mucocutaneous junctions (lips, nostrils, vagina), and in the armpits and groin areas. In some cases, the footpads will be involved. This disease may spontaneously regress unlike the other disorders.

Night Safety Tactics

Equipment to keep you safe



A light-up collar can even make it easier to see your dog loose in his yard.

The best way to keep yourself and your dog safe after dark is to stay inside. But that's not always possible. The mental and physical benefits of exercise for your dog makes skipping his walk a bad idea. Instead, take precautions:

- 1 **Assume all drivers are distracted.** Walking your dog on the roadside is dangerous and requires your complete attention. Do not wear headphones or ear buds. You need all your senses available.
- 2 **Walk with your dog on the outside.** Face traffic. Use a short leash. Stick to well-lit, familiar areas, preferably where traffic moves more slowly. If possible, walk with a friend or family member.
- 3 **Carry a cell phone and whistle.** Pepper spray's a good idea, too, if it's legal in your area. These devices can help deflect unwanted attention, whether it's coming from wildlife or a person.
- 4 **Carry an LED flashlight.** Turn it on and let it swing as you walk. The motion may draw an inattentive driver's attention (a flashlight also comes in handy when picking up poop in the dark).
- 5 **Wear reflective gear.** Check out reflective gear for runners, such as the 247 Viz Reflective Running Vest Safety Gear, which includes two reflective bands for arms or ankles. For your dog, a lighted LED collar is a necessity. You can add a lighted leash and reflective vest, set on blinking or strobe. Don't let nighttime dog walking get you down. It's important, but so is the safety of you and your dog. ■

Introducing a New Pet

Help your dog get along with a new family member

Getting a new pet is always exciting, whether it's a playful new kitten or an adorable senior dog adopted from the shelter. But your current dog might not be quite as thrilled about the new addition as you are.

Some dogs love new pets, but others can take longer to warm up. It is up to you to make sure that the first interactions are positive, setting the scene for a long and friendly relationship. "Be patient, do it slowly, and do not rush the process," says Leni K. Kaplan, MS, DVM, of Cornell University's Small Animal Community Practice. "Some pets will click right away and others will need more time to adjust and gain trust."

Know Your Dog

Consider your dog's personality when deciding how to introduce a new pet.

Does your dog enjoy meeting and socializing with other dogs? Or does she prefer to hang with the humans? Does she automatically try to chase cats, or is she respectful of them?

Also think about how strongly your dog is attached to you, and how high her prey drive is. If your dog is really possessive of you, especially if she has been your only pet, she might not be thrilled about "sharing" you at first. If she gets really intense about chasing squirrels, birds, and other fast-moving small animals, you will need to control introductions so that she doesn't think the new pet is prey to be chased.

Even if your dog is a social butterfly, you should still exercise some caution during the first couple weeks after a new pet moves in. "Always supervise

them even if they appear to be getting along," says Dr. Kaplan. "When they are not being directly supervised, keep them separated into different rooms or in individual dog crates. Baby gates work great for some dogs, but other dogs will jump the gate or push it over."

Misunderstandings and accidents can happen. Keeping your dog and your new pet separated when unsupervised will help to make sure that no one gets hurt.

Introducing a New Dog or Puppy

"Introduce them in a 'neutral' territory if possible so that neither feels like they are 'on-guard' and need to go into 'protection or defensive' mode," says Dr. Kaplan. Even the friendliest dog knows that her house is hers, so your dog will be more likely to greet the new dog or puppy calmly if it is somewhere else, such as a park or a friend's house.

Keeping the introduction calm and low-key will also help. "Make sure the situation is controlled, such as having the dogs on leash," says Dr. Kaplan. For a friendly dog, you can probably allow them to approach each other fairly quickly. If your dog is more reserved, start with both dogs on leash where they can see each other but have some space. As they relax, you can move them closer together. Going for a walk with the dogs moving parallel to each other is another great way to diffuse tension and get them used to each others' presence.

At your house, repeat the introduction in your yard so the dogs still have some space. Then when everyone is calm, you can move them into the house. Have both dogs enter the house at the same time, one after the other. If you

send your dog in ahead and stay outside with the puppy for a few extra minutes, she may try to defend "her" house from the intruder when you do try to bring the new dog in.

It is usually best to limit

Your older dog may need a little time to reach the "I Wanna Hold Your Paw" stage.



Set the Stage for Success

No matter what your new pet is, these tips will help ensure success when introducing it to your dog:

- ▶ Introduce on neutral territory
- ▶ Go slow
- ▶ Use leashes to control the interaction
- ▶ Keep them separate if one or the other is overly excited
- ▶ Always separate the pets when unsupervised (such as while you work or sleep) for the first couple weeks
- ▶ Take dogs for walks together
- ▶ Don't allow chasing

toys for the initial introduction so that you don't have to worry about the dogs fighting over the same toy.

If one dog gets snarky, calmly separate them, and let them settle down before trying again.

For dogs who don't really like other dogs, keeping them separated by a baby gate or crates for several days can be a good strategy to allow them to get used to each other's scent and presence while still having a barrier in place to keep everyone safe.

Introducing a New Cat or Kitten

Neutral territory is ideal for introducing a new cat, too, but more challenging. The most important part of introducing a new cat or kitten is keeping the kitty safe.

Start by setting up your new cat in a room behind a tall baby gate or—even better—in a large crate. Then allow your dog to check it out. The crate will keep your cat safe but allows them to both see and smell each other.

For the first few days to weeks, only allow the animals to interact under supervision. Put your dog in her crate while you allow the cat to explore the house. As the cat settles in and becomes more comfortable with the new environment, you can switch to putting your dog on a leash when the cat is loose. The leash will prevent chasing.

If your dog tends to fixate on your new cat and stares at her intensely with

(continues on page 7)

Home Alone Time Limits

Bladder control and how long he can “hold it”

Leaving your dog home alone is an unfortunate reality for many dog lovers. Work, school, and stores usually don't accommodate our canine companions, forcing you to leave your dog alone. While a quick trip to the grocery store is usually not a concern, longer outings may leave you wondering if they're “too long” for your dog's bladder control. Individual dogs may vary, but there are some general guidelines that you can follow.

Puppies

Puppies have smaller bladders and need to urinate frequently. The younger the puppy, the more bathroom breaks are needed.

Generally, puppies can be left one hour for each month of age. So, a 4-month-old puppy can usually be left for four hours, and a 6-month-old puppy can be left for six hours. If you need to be gone longer than that, try to arrange for a friend or dog walker to come and take your puppy for a short walk, or set him up in a pen with a pee pad.

Most puppies can sleep through the

New pet, continued from page 6)

her whole body taut and ready to spring, she is not ready to be loose with the cat. Take some more time for them to get used to each other being around.

When you do try having both pets loose at the same time, make sure that your cat has easy access to plenty of hiding places (either low or high) where she can get away from your dog if needed.

Introducing Small Animals

Small animals, such as guinea pigs, hamsters, or rabbits, should never be left unattended with your dog. After all, your dog instinctively considers these little guys to be snacks.

When you first bring home a small animal, your dog may be excited. Place the cage on a secure table or behind a baby gate, making sure that your dog can't knock the cage over if she is trying to get to the little critter.

If you need to leave the house, make sure that your dog does not have access to the cage. You can relax these rules as your dog gets used to the little guy. ■



Waiting for you is difficult enough for your canine pal. Adding the urge to pee can make things far worse.

night, but if your pup starts to fuss, he likely needs to pee! With time, most canines outgrow the need for a nighttime pee break.

Adult Dogs

Ideally, most adult dogs should only be left for six to eight hours at a time. Many dogs can hold their urine for up to 10 or 12 hours, if necessary, but this is a long time and likely uncomfortable. Keep track of how often you go to the bathroom every day! Apart from overnight, it is a lot more frequent than we ask of our dogs.

Senior dogs often need to go out more frequently, so as your dog ages, plan extra bathroom breaks.

If you need to leave your dog for an extended time on a regular basis, enlist the help of a trusted friend or a dog walker. You can also install a dog door that allows your pooch access to a secure outdoor space to take care of business as needed.

Sudden Setbacks

If your dog or puppy has been doing well for a certain amount of time and abruptly starts having accidents in the house when left for that amount of time, there may be an underlying medical reason. Dogs of all ages can get urinary tract infections, which increase the frequency and urgency of urination.

Some more serious conditions can also make dogs have accidents, ranging

from urinary incontinence (most common in older spayed female dogs) to kidney disease to cancer.

If your dog suddenly starts having accidents, drop off a clean and fresh urine sample for your veterinarian to examine. This can reveal signs of infection, as well as some signs of kidney issues. Urine culture and sensitivity, bloodwork, and other diagnostics may be necessary to definitively diagnose systemic issues such as kidney failure or a resistant bacterial infection.

Ease Into It

For a dog, being left alone involves more stress than just needing to pee. Dogs are social creatures and enjoy our company. Get your dog used to being left alone gradually by starting with short outings and slowly building up the time.

Also, don't forget to give your pup a good walk before you leave! Having an empty bladder and bowels right at the start of your absence will keep your canine comfortable for longer. A short walk before bedtime will help your dog to sleep through the night, too. Going for a walk will also use up some of your dog's energy, encouraging him to rest.

Other things that can help with the emotional aspect of being left alone is leaving your dog with a puzzle toy to chew on or leaving the television or music playing. You can also record yourself reading a book and set it to play while you're gone so your dog can listen to your voice. ■

What You Can Do

- ▶ Talk with a trusted stay-at-home neighbor about letting your dog out during the day
- ▶ Discuss with your boss the option of a longer lunch break, so you can go home and turn your dog out.
- ▶ Look into using pee pads, indoor dog potties, and grass patches inside your house.
- ▶ Doggie diapers are a possibility as well, if your dog will leave them on.
- ▶ If accidents start for no known reason, that's a signal to get a veterinary checkup to ensure he isn't battling a urinary tract infection or other ailment.

Canine Car Trouble

Your anxious travel companion may need a little help

Q When I adopted Lucy, a Greyhound-Retriever mix, she was fine in the car—for short trips. She loves it when I say, “Wanna go for a ride?” She’s all in! The trouble comes when the ride is more than 15 or 20 minutes.

The first time I took Lucy on a long trip, she was just a year old. Despite my daughter also being in the car, at about the 30-minute mark, Lucy insisted on standing next to me, her front paws on my right leg and her back legs on the floor behind the console, with her eyes watching the road ahead. She didn’t want to sit; she wanted to see where we were going. She did lots of panting, almost as if she’s hyperventilating. We stopped a bunch of times, turning a 6.5-hour drive into about nine hours.

A couple years went by, and I tried again, but I was solo, and she was (again) panicky at about a half hour—so much so that I turned around and went home.

The next time, I took her out and played ball before the trip, and I stopped every 30 minutes so she could get out of the car. She still stood with her paws on my leg (I have a seat belt that attaches to her collar), watching the road, but at least she wasn’t panting. When all was said and done, the trip took about 10 hours.

My questions are:

- ▶ Is it sensible to give a dog medication to calm her if she’s spooked by long trips? If so, which are most effective? Are there any over-the-counter products? What about CBD? How long before you hit the road should you give a dog some meds?
- ▶ Is it smart to stop frequently or better to plow through and get to where you’re going with minimal stops?
- ▶ Are there any tricks for dog travel that might help Lucy? I know people crate their dogs in the back, but Lucy isn’t crate trained, so I’d have to start from scratch.

She’s clearly not afraid to ride in the car. She just doesn’t like long distances. I would prefer to train her out of this rather than use meds, but I will do whatever I need to do. Thank you for your help.

A You are a very dedicated dog owner to try so hard to allay Lucy’s fears by stopping frequently and exercising her. Unfortunately, exhaustion is not a cure for anxiety. First, you should determine if the underlying problem is carsickness. Although most carsick dogs drool and vomit, some exhibit only panting, as Lucy does. Fortunately, Cerenia (maropitant citrate) is FDA-approved to treat vomiting in dogs. It also helps with motion sickness and helps block pain. I would ask your veterinarian for a prescription for that because that is the easiest thing to rule out.

The next is the question of your and her safety. She should not be in the front seat where she can interfere with your driving. A nice airline crate in the back, if you have a large car, is much safer and she would not be able to see out,

which is often the problem when the dog misbehaves in the car.

If you have a smaller vehicle, you might consider trying a tube, like the Pet Travel Tube Car Crate Kennel or the Pet Containment Barrier Mesh Tube, in which she is confined between the front and back seat.

Finally, there is a matter of drugs. You asked about CBD. There is only one study on the effect of CBD on anxiety in dogs; it was ineffective. CBD may help with arthritis, but not with behavior problems. The good news is that there are medications with rapid onset that could help relieve her anxiety. Trazodone is one such medication that your veterinarian can dispense or prescribe. Trazodone increases serotonin activity in the central nervous system. It is used as an anti-depressant in humans. While not FDA-approved for dogs, it is widely used off-label in dogs. Trazodone has the advantage that it is a situational drug. That means you only need to give it to her when you anticipate a problem, in your case, a lengthy car ride.

Over-the-counter drugs have two disadvantages: 1) they take longer to take effect and are usually not as effective and 2) they are usually more expensive than prescription drugs. Good luck and happy, safe driving! ■



Most dogs are safer and travel better in a crate inside the car, rather than loose. Note the water dishes in front of these crates. However, crates should be secured in the vehicle, so they can’t slide around in the event of a quick stop or turn.



Do You Have a Behavior Concern?

Send your behavior questions to Cornell’s renowned behavior expert Katherine Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., shown here with Yuki, her West Highland White Terrier. Email to dogwatcheditor@cornell.edu or send by regular mail to DogWatch, 535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1713.



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