

THE HAIRBALL DIGEST

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM LIFETIME SMALL ANIMAL HOSPITAL

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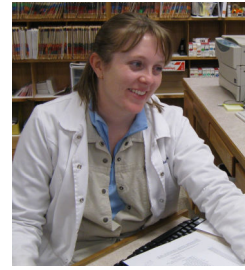
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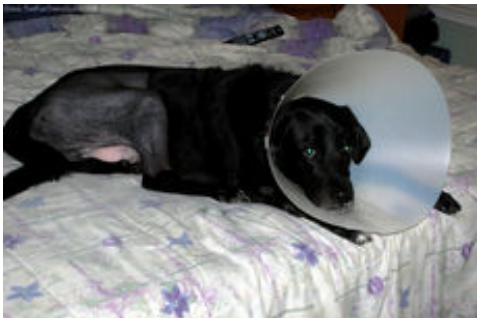


Ask the Dr.



I don't like that big plastic collar so why'd you send one home with my pet? He doesn't need it.

It goes by many names: the cone of shame, lampshade, satellite dish and e-collar (short for the dignified sounding Elizabethan collar). Nearly every dog owner (and many cat owners) has come face to face with this menace, this torture device so loved by veterinarians. Slip one over your pet's head, and his poor neck is immediately frozen into place, your furry friend staring forlornly into the sky. He seems unable to eat or drink, due to the inability to move his neck. He cannot pass through a doorway or past a piece of furniture without running into it. He will try to sniff the ground, plow a furrow in your yard, and roll himself tail over teakettle. When he realizes how incapacitating this device is, he will exact his revenge on you by running the collar into the back of your legs. Repeatedly. Nobody likes the cone.



So why do veterinarians insist on sending this ridiculous piece of plastic home with you? **BECAUSE WE THINK THEY NEED IT!** Dogs and cats are drawn to "fix" anything that is wrong on their bodies. They chew bandages, splints, and casts off. They lick or chew stitches out. They can behave innocently all day long while you are watching and may even go several days leaving their wounds and wraps alone, but it only takes a few minutes to undo the veterinarian's treatment. (Need I remind you – a treatment that you paid good, hard-earned money for!)

Why do they do this? Pets will lick or chew at painful areas. They have been known to lick skin over arthritic joints until the skin is raw and infected. They may wait several days to start licking – all healing wounds go through a rather itchy phase. Licking can delay healing, create a moist environment that encourages infection, and may necessitate further treatments. While a few licks may help keep a wound clean of dirt and debris (although it's an old wife's tale that dogs have healing properties in their saliva – it's just good old spit, nothing special), very few dogs can stop at a few licks. This is because licking disrupts skin cells, which release a chemical cathepsin. This chemical causes itching. Itching makes them want to lick more, which releases more cathepsin (and other chemicals such as histamine). You see where this is going. The only way to break the cycle is to stop the licking, and, in all our advances in veterinary technology, the E-collar is the best way we have to achieve this. (OK, there are such things as soft collars or inflatable collars, which may be a wonderful solution for your pet, especially if the condition is chronic or your pet is accident-prone.)



When treating any wound, your vet should talk to you about how to tell if your pet is comfortable (for example, they could chew at a bandage that was applied too tightly). Ask for other hints to deter licking, from bitter sprays to topical anti-itch products. Bottom line, if we send an e-collar home, please use it. Pets quickly adjust to wearing them. We want your pet to heal as well as possible, and we want to protect your pet from further injury or infection.



Lifetime Small Animal Hospital welcomes you to our website!

www.LTSAHosp.com Check out our Web Store!!

Groomer's Corner

IT'S SPRING....

Now that the days grow longer and the weather is warming I have been often approached with the question on everyone's mind. How do I get my pet to quit shedding? Well I have bad news and good news.

First the bad news. Shedding can not be stopped. Those clumps of hair that cover clothes, carpet, and furniture at this time of year are part of the natural cycle of hair growth. This process occurs ALL year long, but the heaviest occurs in the spring when pets shed their winter coat. Even short haired pets seem to leave a trail where ever they go. The good news is that shedding can be reduced, assuming of course that there is no underlining medical condition. The major ways to reduce shedding are through diet and grooming.

The amount a pet will shed will vary depending on the type of food they are eating. Foods properly complimented with vitamins, nutrients, and omega-3 and 6-fatty acids tend to reduce the shedding, like the iVet foods that we carry. But no diet can make up for thorough grooming. Grooming removes excess hair before it ends up on carpets and furniture. All it takes is time, effort and a good brush.

Follow these four steps to cut down on shed hair in your home:

- First, brush your pets coat thoroughly to get rid of as much loose hair as possible. Weather-permitting, you might want to do this on the deck or patio to keep the hair out of the house.
- Next, bathe your pet, massaging the shampoo in well. Be sure to use a product formulated specifically for pets. Human shampoos and soaps are not good for pets skin because they have a different skin pH.
- After toweling your pet to remove most of the moisture, brush again until the coat is dry. If you use a home hair dryer, leave it on the coolest setting and hold it away from your pet so you don't burn him.
- Finally, take a steel-pinned comb and run it through the coat to make sure that all the shedding hair has been removed.

To be most effective, be sure you brush your pet thoroughly once or twice a week to remove hair that is being newly shed and shampoo every few weeks.

If your pet is a heavy shedder or you just don't want to deal with the mess yourself, take him to a professional groomer.





Pet Safety Corner



Spring has sprung, and with the change of season, our thoughts inevitably turn to Easter celebrations, spring cleaning and much-needed home improvement projects. But the new balmy weather can prove not-so-sunny for curious pets—or their unwitting parents. Before you embark on seasonal chores or outdoor revelry, take inventory of potential springtime hazards for your delicate, furry friend. To help you out, the ASPCA experts have come up with a few seasonal tips that will help prevent mishaps or misfortunes.

Easter Treats and Decorations

Keep Easter lilies and candy bunnies in check—chocolate goodies are toxic to cats, dogs and ferrets, and lilies can be fatal if ingested by our furry friends. And be mindful, kitties love to nibble on colorful plastic grass, which can lead to an obstructed digestive tract, severe vomiting and dehydration.

Screen Yourself

Many pet parents welcome the breezy days of spring by opening their windows. Unfortunately, they also unknowingly put their pets at risk—especially cats, who are apt to jump or fall through unscreened windows. Be sure to install snug and sturdy screens in all of your windows. If you have adjustable screens, make sure they are tightly wedged into window frames.

Buckle Up!

While every pet parent knows dogs love to feel the wind on their furry faces, allowing them to ride in the bed of pick-up trucks or stick their heads out of moving-car windows is dangerous. Flying debris and insects can cause inner ear or eye injuries and lung infections, and abrupt stops or turns can cause major injury, or worse! Pets in cars should always be secured in a crate or wearing a seatbelt harness designed especially for them.

Spring Cleaning

Spring cleaning is a time-honored tradition in many households, but be sure to keep all cleaners and chemicals out of your pets' way! Almost all commercially sold cleaning products contain chemicals that are harmful to pets. The key to using them safely is to read and follow label directions for proper use and storage.

Home Improvement 101

Products such as paints, mineral spirits and solvents can be toxic to your pets and cause severe irritation or chemical burns. Carefully read all labels to see if the product is safe to use around your furry friends. Also, be cautious of physical hazards, including nails, staples, insulation, blades and power tools. It may be wise to confine your dog or cat to a designated pet-friendly room during home improvement projects.

Let Your Garden Grow—With Care

Pet parents, take care—fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides keep our plants and lawns healthy and green, but their ingredients aren't meant for four-legged consumption and can be fatal if your pet ingests them. Always store these poisonous products in out-of-the-way places and follow label instructions carefully.

Poisonous Plants

Time to let your garden grow! But beware, many popular springtime plants—including Easter lilies, rhododendron and azaleas—are highly toxic to pets and can easily prove fatal if eaten.

Pesky Little Critters

April showers bring May flowers—and an onslaught of bugs! Make sure your pet is on year-round heartworm preventive medication, as well as a flea and tick control program. Ask your doctor to recommend a plan designed specifically for your pet.

🐾 Cat-ly Advice 🐾



[Cat Wisdom from our resident felines]

We cats have been described as vengeful or spiteful. Honestly, we do not sit up at night plotting ways to make your life miserable.

When we don't use the litter box, we are not 'out to get you', as many people think. We are just using the one way we know of to get your attention and let you know that something is wrong. It could be a medical issue, but often there is another underlying problem.

We cats like clean litter boxes, and if they are too dirty, we WILL find another place to go. You don't like a dirty potty either, we watch you humans scrubbing your little stink room all the time. Even if the box is clean to our satisfaction, we may not like the litter you chose. Some of us do not like that perfumed stuff, or the really fine stuff that sticks to our feet. Some of us like good old dirt, like from outside.

Many of us really dislike those covered boxes. It's like going into a trap – one way in, one way out. It's always good to have an escape route, because you never know when something is going to sneak up on you while you are pre-occupied.

As we get older, it can become difficult to go up and down stairs, or to step into a box with high sides. If we can't get the box easily, we will go where we can. Occasionally there will be obstacles blocking the route to the litter box. Some dogs take delight in blocking the hallway and not letting us pass. Sometimes another cat will block the entrance to the room where the box is, or there are kittens that like to pounce while you are doing your business.

These types of inconvenience will definitely put a damper on a trip to the bathroom. A second litter box in another part of the house would be a big help.

Listen carefully to what we are telling you. Investigate and find out what is causing the problem. Remember, we aren't getting even, we are asking you to pay attention.

Editors Note: We recommend having one litter box per cat plus one. That means 3 cats, 4 litter boxes. Do not place all the litter boxes together in the same location. At least one needs to be somewhere else in the house. Do not place food and water dishes next to the litter box. You don't like to eat in the bathroom and neither does your cat. Cleaning the box daily is also recommended. At least every 3 months, the boxes should be washed with soap and water.

Changing brands of cat litter can cause your cat to go outside the box. You may have to return to the original brand of litter. If you are unsure of the type of litter your cat prefers, you can set up a "litter box cafeteria". Get two litter boxes and fill each with a different litter. You can have clay litter scented and unscented, or clay litter and clumping litter, or clumping litter and pelleted litter. Let your cat decide what type of litter they prefer. If they pick a litter, but still go outside the box, try different types of box, low side, high side or covered – each with the preferred litter. You may also have to change location of the box. If the box is near the washer or dryer, the noise may frighten the



cat. In a multi-cat household, you may end up using more than one type of litter to keep them happy.

Also pay attention to other animals and small children in the house. They may be intentionally or unintentionally blocking the cat's access to the litter box. There are also additives that can be mixed into the litter to make the box more attractive to the cat.

The Veterinary Technician



When you drop your pet off at the veterinary hospital, have you ever thought about whom besides the veterinarian is involved in their care? The answer to that question is the veterinary technician. They provide the veterinarian with technical support for all aspects of patient care.

In order to become a veterinary technician, one must attend a college program that is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The curriculums at these accredited programs is very thorough...educating in all aspects of animal care. Additionally, a graduate technician can take an examination offered by the state where she works. This test will help to ensure that your pet will be taken care of by a qualified and certified professional.

What is the technician's role in your pet's care? A veterinary technician can be involved in all aspects of patient care except the performing of surgery, the making of a diagnosis, and the prescribing of medications.

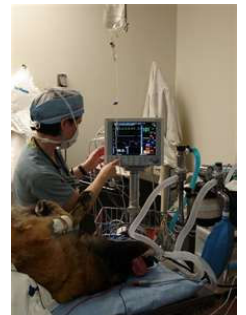
Let's walk your pet through the veterinary hospital and see exactly how the technician is involved...

As you come into the hospital, it may be the veterinary technician who greets you and your pet and escorts you to the exam room. There the technician may listen and make notes while you describe the reason for your pet's visit. She may give your pet a physical exam- look at the pet's eyes and ears, listen to the heart, and take the temperature. All of this information will be passed along to the veterinarian for their evaluation.



If your pet is to have lab tests run, such as a check for Heartworm, a Complete Blood Count (CBC), or a check for parasites, it will be the veterinary technician who takes the appropriate samples and using high tech instruments will document the results for the veterinarian's interpretation. When further testing is required - such as x-rays - the veterinary technician will take the x-rays and deliver them to the veterinarian.

Is your pet at the hospital for surgery? If so the veterinary technician may perform a physical exam on your pet prior to the procedure, will run the appropriate lab work, and will insure that all equipment is ready for the veterinarian's use. She may, under the supervision of the veterinarian, administer the anesthetic agent to your pet to protect your pet's comfort during any surgical procedure. During the procedure your pet's heart and respiratory rates will be closely monitored by the technician to ensure the patient's safety during this time. Or the veterinary technician may actually assist the veterinary surgeon during the procedure by passing instruments and other items to the surgeon. The veterinary technician will be with your pet during its recovery from the anesthesia and will be responsible for administering medication at the veterinarian's direction to manage any pain. Veterinary technicians are trained to respond to all of your pet's needs that may arise after the surgical procedure.



Bad breath? As you may know, your pet can have bad breath due to a number of oral hygiene abnormalities. The veterinary technician in most hospitals will be able to discuss with you the causes of bad breath and ways to treat the problem. Just like the dental hygienist that you may visit, she has been trained to clean your pet's teeth using a machine called an ultrasonic scaler. She will also evaluate your pet's teeth, taking any concerns she may have to the veterinarian.

From the moment your pet arrives at the hospital, aren't you glad to know there is someone of the technician's education and qualifications to provide the excellent nursing care that your pet deserves? The next time you take your pet to the animal hospital, ask to meet the veterinary technician. Ask them from which of the over 80 AVMA-accredited programs they graduated. Meeting the veterinary technician on staff at your local animal hospital will give you a sense of comfort knowing that your pet will be in the hands of a dedicated pet health care professional... a caring and qualified veterinary technician.