

MY PET IS SICK, WHAT CAN I DO?

**Common-sense tips on pet health issues frequently encountered in
Utila**



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Introduction

Pets, like children, often have more or less serious health issues that cause us alarm. There are a few things we can do to help our pets, and this brochure is a compilation of the most common pet ailments with suggestions on what to do to help them. If what you are trying is not helping in a few days or the symptoms are getting worse, take your pet to the vet. Below is the list of veterinarians in La Ceiba and Roatan:

Dr. Calderone in La Ceiba, tel. 2441-1812 or 9995-2260

Dr. Bueno in La Ceiba, tel. 440-2539

Dr. Santiago Soto in Roatan, tel. 9909-0595

Diarrhea

Diarrhea in dogs and cats is most often caused by intestinal parasites - worms. The first thing to do is to purchase a cat or dog wormer from one of the local ferreterias.

IMPORTANT: Wormers for cats are different from wormers for dogs. Make sure to purchase the right one.

If the wormer does not help, and/or your pet starts vomiting, it is the sign that its problem may be due to something they may have eaten that disagrees with them. This is pretty common in young puppies and kittens.

Pets can also get diarrhea or start vomiting if you suddenly change their food, if you give them cow milk to drink or if dogs get hold of cat food which is too rich for them. **Don't forget: puppies and kittens cannot digest cow milk. Cow milk is for cow babies!**

The treatment for diarrhea if the wormer did not help

- a) Fast for 24 hours – no food. That will calm the stomach.
- b) Only give ice cubes or small amounts of water frequently.
- c) Give puppies or dogs Pepcid AC or Famotidine at 0.5 mg per pound or Pepto Bismol at 1 teaspoon per 20 pounds of dog's weight every 8 hours.

IMPORTANT: Do not give Pepto Bismol to cats!

d) After the fast, feed small meals of rice and boiled chicken for several days.

e) If they are feeling better, return them back to their regular diet. If they are still having diarrhea or vomiting, your pet might have a more serious condition, for example an intestinal obstruction or an intussusception, which can be life threatening. The symptoms are very similar, but these conditions require immediate veterinary treatment.

CATS:

Fasting and bland diet of chicken and rice work for cats as well. While the cat is fasting or eating only rice and chicken, give her or him Imodium AD at 1/4 capsule every 8 hours.

There are other possible problems your pet can have, such as obstructions caused by swallowed bones, or kidney disease. To give a proper diagnosis and to know for sure what is the best treatment for your pet, your pet needs to be examined by a veterinarian.

Dry retching in dogs

Dry retching without any vomiting along with a bloated appearance is an extremely serious condition in deep-chested dogs. This condition can be life threatening if left untreated. It is called Gastric Volvulus and causes the stomach to twist on its axis, causing an emergency situation for your dog. You need to take your dog to the vet as soon as possible.

Vomiting

In most cases, both with cats and dogs, the vomiting is caused by something they may have eaten that does not agree with them.

The treatment

1. Fast (no food) for 12-24 hours to allow the stomach to calm down and heal.
2. Give only small amounts of water during the fast or ice cubes.
3. Give Pepcid AC or Famotidine at 0.5 mg per pound of pet's weight every 8 hrs.
4. For dogs, you can give 1 teaspoon per 20 pounds of Pepto Bismol every 8 hours. Pepto Bismol (the pink stuff) is available at the pharmacy or at the Bushes market.
5. After the fast, feed rice and boiled chicken soup for a few days.

IMPORTANT: Pepto Bismol cannot be given to a cat.

If the pet stops vomiting, return the him to his regular food. If the vomiting continues, especially during the fast, take your dog or cat to your vet in La Ceiba for an exam and lab work to find out

what is causing it. It is extremely important to do this as soon as possible, since vomiting can cause severe dehydration or could be caused by other serious problems such as an intestinal obstruction that would require veterinary intervention.

Cat looks like it is choking - Hair Balls in Cats

This condition is only found in cats because dogs do not groom themselves the way cats do. While they groom themselves, cats ingest large amount of hair. In most cases, their digestive tract is capable of eliminating this hair. But, sometimes, the hair can get stuck in their intestinal tract causing vomiting with nothing coming out. This means that the hair is too far down the intestinal tract to come out through their mouth, but it is still making them feel nauseous.

Treatment

The effective treatment is to put a dab of margarine or Vaseline on the cat's nose every 4-6 hrs that they will lick off. The grease will help the hairy mass slide through their tract easily, resolving the problem. If this does not help after a day or so, take your pet to the vet to be examined since there are other more serious issues that can cause similar symptoms.

Dog bleeding from the nose and other parts

This problem is most commonly caused by the disease spread by ticks called Ehrlichia, or ehrlichiosis, also called *canine* hemorrhagic fever, *canine* typhus and other names. Ehrlichia is bacteria that ticks pick up when they bite a sick dog, and transfer to other dogs they bite afterwards.

The early symptoms, which show from one to three weeks after the dog is infected, are lethargy, weight loss and anemia. Dog might bleed from the nose or other places or have blood in urine.

Treatment

At this stage, the disease can successfully be treated with Doxycycline at 5 mg per pound every 12 hours for 3 weeks.

If the disease is not treated, it can become chronic. Chronic ehrlichiosis symptoms are weight loss, neurologic symptoms, fluid accumulation in the hind legs and sometimes kidney disease. It must be treated aggressively with IV fluids, antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications. Many dogs with chronic ehrlichiosis do not survive.

The best protection from ehrlichia is tick control. Regular use of products such as Frontline, Advantix, Adams flea/tick spray and other similar products will decrease your dog's risk of contracting this potentially fatal disease.

Cats can get Erhlichia but it is very rare. It is not a worry on the island.

Skin Diseases of Dogs and cats

There is a range of skin diseases that are plaguing dogs in Utila. Here are some of the most common ones. Check this [website](#) to see the photos of each disease so you can better guess what is wrong.

Excessive scratching and itching – Flea Allergies

The most common skin disease that we see here on Utila is due to an allergic reaction to flea bites. Even if you do not see any fleas, it only takes one flea bite to cause excessive scratching and chewing. When your dog starts scratching, it causes an overgrowth of the staph bacteria, which normally live on their skin, causing what is called a Pyoderma or “**Hot Spots**”. The skin looks red and raw, with patches without hair.

The flea allergies affect dogs and cats and the treatment is the same.

Treatment

Give Benadryl at 1 mg per pound of pet’s weight every 12 hours for 10 days. Benadryl helps dog to stop scratching.

Apply Betaderm to the areas that appear red or irritated every 8 hours. Clip away all the hair in this area. Betaderm treats the skin infection caused by scratching. Both Benadryl and Betaderm can be purchased at the pharmacy over the counter.

Bath your dog weekly with a good dog shampoo. If your dog continues scratching and his skin does not look better, it means that his skin irritation is caused by something else.

Hair loss starting around the face – Demodectic Mange

Demodectic mange is very common in Utila. It shows as hair loss and irritation usually starting around the eyes and head. It is caused by tiny mites normally living on dog’s skin. Healthy dogs can have it and not show any problems. But, many dogs on the island are inbred or weak and their immune system is suppressed and cannot protect them from too many mange mites.

Cats do not get this type of mange.

Treatment

Demodectic mange is treated with Ivermectin that is available at the hardware store. For mange, the dose is 1 cc per 100 pounds of dog's weight, orally (in food, or in a piece of bread) every day for 3 to 4 weeks. That works out to be 0.1 cc per day for a 10 pound dog, 0.3 cc per day for a 30 pound dog, 0.5 cc per day for a 50 pound dog and so on.

If the dog is scratching, give him Benadryl at 1 mg per pound of dog's weight every 12 hours.

Excessive scratching and chewing – Allergic Dermatitis

Allergic dermatitis can be caused by anything that your dogs may come into contact with, such as grasses or even dust. It will cause excessive scratching and chewing on any part of your dog's body but often the feet.

Treatment

Give your dog Benadryl or Diphenhydramine at 1 mg per pound of dog's weight every 12 hours and put cortisone cream every 8 hours to the affected area. Both are available at Bushes or from Dr. Jennifer. If this is not helping, your dog should get steroids. You will need to take your dog to the vet in La Ceiba. You can also contact Dr. Loretta Potts through Utila Animal Clinic Facebook group to find out if your dog's problem could benefit from steroid pills, which are available over the counter in the pharmacy.

Lumps and scabs on the skin – Folliculitis

This is a condition characterized by lumps and scabs on the skin of your dog. These are small staph infections of the follicles, tiny pouches at the root of dog's hairs.

Treatment

Folliculitis is normally treated by applying Betaderm to the affected areas every 6 hours. Before starting the treatment, clip away any hair around the spot.

Small bumps with pus in puppies - Impetigo

This is a disease of puppies shown as small bumps that contain pus. It is caused by staph infection. Impetigo is treated applying Betaderm to the affected area every 6 hrs.

Ringworm

This skin problem is caused by a fungal infection that often appears in rings. It is very contagious between dogs, and even humans can catch it.

Treatment

Ringworm is treated using an anti-fungal cream available at the pharmacy. This cream is commonly used for ‘jock itch’ and ‘athletes’ foot’ in humans.

Dog is chewing paw or leg – Acral Lick Granuloma

This is another very common condition on Utila. Your dog is chewing at an area such as a paw or leg, usually because it is itching him, and this chewing causes even more irritation, causing your dog to lick even more, and so on. This licking and chewing causes a secondary staph infection (not contagious to humans or other dogs), caused by the moisture and warmth from licking. This allows staph bacteria, which normally lives on the dog’s skin, to grow fast and cause lesions.

Treatment

This condition is very difficult to control, but should be treated with steroids and wrapping this area, so that your dog cannot get to it.

To see the examples of these common skin diseases, go to this [website](#) and look at the slide show to get better idea what is your pet’s problem.

Poisoned pets

Rayo and other poisons are being widely used on the island to exterminate rats, cockroaches and other pests. The poisons are often camouflaged in food, what makes them attractive to pets as well.

What poisons are used in Utila?

Everyone has experienced the very sad and terrible effect on a dog or cat that has been poisoned by the product called **Rayo**. This is an extremely strong and untreatable poison that is sold in almost all of the tiendas on the island. The only way to prevent this from happening to your pets is to keep them contained, either in your yard or on a leash. If the dogs and cats are allowed to roam, there is always a risk of being poisoned by Rayo. There is no antidote and no cure and **these animals always die**.

Other poisons such as **Roach Motel**, luckily, are not toxic to dogs but if your dog chews on its plastic container, this could be ingested and tear up their digestive tract.

Recently, **fertilizers** were used to kill off the crabs in the yards of people on the South Shore. Fertilizers are extremely toxic, not only to crabs but also to dogs and cats.

Treatment

If you think that your animal may have been poisoned, the first thing to do is to induce vomiting by giving 1 teaspoon of hydrogen peroxide per 5 pounds of the animal's weight. Wait 5 minutes and if there is no vomiting, do it again. Give your dog pieces of bread to soak up the poison.

Some vets recommend keeping an injection of atropine, which is the antidote for an organophosphate poison such as insecticides. Others recommend giving an injection of Vitamin K to prevent an anti-coagulant poisoning such as **Decon**. But, these poisons are rarely used on the island because Rayo is so inexpensive and easy to purchase.

How to prevent pet poisoning

1. PLEASE keep your animal safe by always taking them out on a leash.
2. When buying a poison for rats, read the fine print before using these products. It is marked on the label if a poison is toxic to pets.
3. If you own a shop in Utila, please do not sell highly toxic products such as Rayo.

Injuries on dogs and cats

Treatment

Any form of injury should be cleaned with peroxide. If there is bleeding, press the wound with a bandage or a clean rag to stop the bleeding. If it looks like your pet needs sutures (the wound needs to be closed) or you just are not sure, take the dog to the vet.

Dog or cat is shaking head - ear infection

If your dog or cat is shaking his head and there is a bad smell coming from his ear, this may be an ear infection.

Treatment

Apply a few drops of Dr. John's ear drops or Swimmer's Ear that can be purchased at the pharmacy. Do this every 8 hours, massage the ear and wipe out the excess.

Ear infection in cats can be treated the same way.

Ear mites in cats

Cats might be shaking their head because they have ear parasites called ear mites. Try treating it the same way as ear infection. If it does not work, get special medicine from the vets in La Ceiba.

You can make your own ear cleaning medicine by mixing 1/3 vinegar, 1/3 alcohol 70%, 1/3 mineral oil (Baby Oil is a mineral oil.)

Swollen ear

Sometimes when a dog or cat shakes head too much because of an infection, the ear will fill with fluid and swell. This is called an Aural Hematoma. It must be lanced to remove the fluid or drained with a needle. Sometimes you have to do this daily for 2-3 weeks.

Treatment

Ear infection is very uncomfortable for your pet so give him or her aspirin at 5 mg per pound or pet's weight every 12 hours and antibiotics such as Amoxicillin at 10 mg per pound every 12 hours to stop this from becoming infected.

A pet is trying to poop but nothing is coming - Constipation

Any digestive disturbance or eating garbage can cause constipation in pets. Your pet will keep trying to defecate with nothing coming out.

Treatment

Give your pet mineral oil, 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of your pet's weight given orally every 4 hours until the poop slides out.

A dog or cat is trying to pee but only a few drops are coming out - Urinary Tract Infection

It is fairly common for cats and dogs to try to urinate with only a few drops coming out, possibly with blood in it. They will continue to strain and suffer great deal of pain. Cats can develop a urinary blockage, which is very serious and possibly life threatening.

Treatment

Urinary tract infection is treated with Amoxicillin at 10 mg per pound of dog's or cat's weight, every 12 hours for 7 days. This antibiotic can be purchased at the pharmacy or from Dr. Jennifer next to Shelby's nursery.

My pet is lethargic

Most often, our dogs here on the island become lethargic due to the tick disease.

Treatment

Start your dog on Doxycycline at 5-10 mg per pound of the dog's weight every 12 hours for 2 weeks. If your dog is eating, also give aspirin at 5 mg per pound of dog's weight every 12 hours to decrease inflammation. Both the antibiotic doxycycline and aspirin can be purchased at the pharmacy or from DR. Jennifer next to Shelby's. If there is no improvement, take your dog to the vet in La Ceiba.

CAT:

A cat usually becomes lethargic because there is an infection or abscess growing somewhere.

Treatment

Give your cat Amoxicillin Pediatric drops 125 mg, 2 cc by mouth every 12 hours for 5-7 days. This antibiotic can be purchased at the Medical store. If there is a large lump, it should be lanced and the pus has to be drained and cleaned with peroxide.

My pet has discharge from eyes

Usually, this means that your dog or cat has an infection or trauma caused by an injury.

Treatment

Purchase an antibiotic eye ointment at the pharmacy or from DR. Jennifer or even at Bushes. Apply a few drops to each eye every 4-6 hrs. If this does not help quickly, it means that there is another reason for the discharge. Take your dog or cat to the vet in La Ceiba as soon as possible.

I found a newborn puppy/kitty, what should I feed it with?

Do not feed the newborn puppy or kitty with cow milk, it will give them diarrhea. Choose one of the recipes below, mix it well, keep it warm but not hot, and feed every two hours with a dropper or a small baby bottle until they are strong enough to eat puppy or kitty food.

Kitten Milk Replacer

- 1 can Evaporated Milk
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons Karo syrup

If a kitten has diarrhea, use this recipe:

- 3 oz. condensed milk
- 3 oz. water
- 4 oz. plain yogurt (NOT low-fat)
- 3 large or 4 small egg yolks

Puppy Milk Replacement

Whole goat's milk, if available

or this recipe:

- 3 oz. sterilized water (baby water OR boiled water that is cooled).
- 1 raw egg yolk.
- 1 cup of plain yogurt (avoid skim or fat free if at all possible).
- 1/2 tsp Karo Syrup or Corn Syrup (NOT HONEY!)

Another recipe:

8 oz of water
8 oz evaporated milk
1 beaten egg yolk
1 tablespoon corn syrup

Read more at: http://www.ehow.com/how_4544375_milk-replacement-formula-puppy-recipes.html

Nail trimming

Only cut the tip of the nail because the quick is close to the end and if cut, bleeds a lot. If your dog starts to bleed because you went too close to the quick, apply pressure and it will stop. Your dog will NOT bleed to death from this.

Vaccinations for dogs

The puppy vaccine is given at 8 weeks. The cocktail vaccine includes Distemper, Parvovirus, Leptospirosis, hepatitis and Parainfluenza. It is important not to give it before puppy is 8 weeks old, or it might interfere with the maternal antibodies protecting your puppy.

It is good to give a booster vaccine, if possible, at 3-4 months of age. At that time puppy should also get the Rabies vaccine. These vaccine boosters should be given at least every 3 years and if possible once a year to be safe. Distemper and Parvovirus are puppy diseases that we see often coming from the mainland, and can be deadly to your puppy. They are also contagious to other animals.