



winter 2013 pet health newsletter

## VET TO PET MOBILE SMALL ANIMAL CLINIC

Dr. David Ruble • Dr. Melissa Battaglia

ph. (412) 496-7779 • [www.vetopet.com](http://www.vetopet.com)



**Thank You!**  
CELEBRATING  
**10 Years**



# Featured Article: **Children and Pet Loss**



a young child that their pet has “gone to sleep” and won’t wake up might lead the child to start fearing that they too will not wake up when they go to bed. Another important thing to keep in mind is to try and include everyone in the family in any decisions. Excluding a child will only add to their

sense of powerlessness. If it is your family’s shared decision, then you can share your grief as well.

### **Under Five Years Old**

Very young children do not realize that death is permanent. Tell them that their pet has died and will not return. These children will sense stress in the household and will need to be reassured that they didn’t do anything to cause their pet’s absence. Try to keep normal routines.

### **Ages Five to Nine**

These children understand the concept of death, but not the finality of it. They realize their pet will not return, but may believe that their pet exists somewhere else, for example, underground living and playing. Cartoons might suggest to them that there is a return from death. These children might feel that any anger they may have had toward the pet made them responsible for the pet’s

death. They should be reassured that this is not true, or else they may start to believe that anger towards family members or friends would have the same effect. At this age, a few short conversations might be more helpful than a long discussion or two.

### **Age Ten and Over**

By this age children have developed the mental and emotional capacity to understand that death is natural, inevitable and universal. They will often grieve like an adult. Watch out for teenagers, though. Because their lives are awash with excess emotion, you may have to give them the level of assurance and support as you would a young child.

Your family should remind each other how fortunate you were to have had such a wonderful animal in your lives. Encourage everyone to find creative ways to express their feelings, such as scrapbooks, pictures, stories or poems. Your family can be creative about how to memorialize your pet, such as planting a tree, and everyone can also do something that has special meaning to them.

When your family comes together and deals with a pet’s death in a positive way, it empowers your children to handle grief in the future. If you have any question please call our office and speak to one of our professional staff.

**P**et loss is an experience every family goes through; whether it is the sudden traumatic death of a pet due to an accident, or the decision to euthanize a pet after treatment options have been exhausted. Understanding the grief process in our children can help us to help them learn and heal.

In adults, the progression through grief follows the typical path of denial, sadness, depression, guilt, anger, and finally, acceptance. Showing your own grief in front of your child is healthy. Children at various ages deal with grief differently. With all ages, it is very important to be honest. Use the words “death”, “dead” and “dying”. **Telling false stories can diminish the power of this important life lesson, and lead to unintended consequences.** For example, telling

**Thank you for reading our newsletter!**

## You Know You've Lost Control When You Begin Making These Exceptions To: “DOG RULES”

1. The dog is not allowed in the house.
2. Okay, the dog is allowed in the house, but only in certain rooms.
3. The dog is allowed in all rooms, but has to stay off the furniture.
4. The dog can get on the old furniture only.
5. Fine, the dog is allowed on all the furniture, but is not allowed to sleep with humans on the bed.
6. Okay, the dog is allowed on the bed, but only by invitation.
7. The dog can sleep on the bed whenever he wants, but not under the covers.
8. The dog can sleep under the covers by invitation only.
9. The dog can sleep under the covers every night.
10. Humans must ask permission to sleep under the covers with the dog.



## Pain Management – *pet don't always say "ouch"*

Anything that causes you physical pain — from a broken toe nail to major trauma — most likely will cause pain to your pet as well.

Pain is not something that your pet must merely suffer — it can affect his happiness and health. Acute pain becomes a serious veterinary concern as it places additional stress on important bodily functions like cardiac, digestive, and immune systems. Uncontrolled pain can slow down a recovery process and if left untreated, potentially result in a deterioration of your pet's condition.



### Pain Management With Elective Procedures

The pain your pet must suffer is something you and our professional staff can do something about. When we refer your pet for a spay/neuter, dental cleaning or other procedures potentially painful to your pet, the referral hospital may provide you with pain management options. This may include injection of a pain medication prior to or directly following surgery or oral pain medications that you can take home.

### Pain Management With Major Trauma

You hope there is never major trauma with your pet. In these situations, pain management is not an option because it is a significant part of treatment. It is especially important to provide pain relief to critically injured pets, as a pet can actually cause further harm to itself if not treated for pain, and pain relief actually provides more rapid stabilization of the injured pet, facilitating recovery.

Your pet is one of your best friends, providing you and your family with unconditional love and companionship. Pain management is not just an objective with our practice, it is a COMMITMENT. Our overriding concern in dealing with our patients is to make them comfortable and feel better fast!

In the past few years, profound advancements have been made in veterinary care. The veterinarian now has superior pain management drugs not available a short time ago. It is now possible to effectively control a pet's pain caused by surgery, trauma, infectious and non-infectious disease, as well as aging.

### Pets Don't Always Say "Ouch!"

Pets may not display symptoms of pain or discomfort. Unlike us, they cannot communicate the need for pain relief. The following characteristics can be a sign that your pet is in pain:

1. Inactivity
2. Lack of appetite
3. Aggressive behavior
4. Inappropriate vocalization
5. Untimely elimination



## Winter Health Hazards

Be careful with floral arrangements that still may be around after the holidays. Lilies are commonly used and many varieties including Tiger, Asian, Japanese Show, Stargazer and Casa Blanca can cause kidney failure in cats. Safe alternatives can include artificial flowers made from silk or plastic.

Common Yuletide plants such as mistletoe and holly berries can be toxic to pets. Should a cat or dog eat mistletoe, they could suffer gastrointestinal

upset and cardiovascular problems. Holly can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy if ingested.

Antifreeze has a sweet taste and can be attractive to pets. Ethylene glycol is the most dangerous and also the most common form of antifreeze. Unfortunately, very small amounts can be lethal to pets. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat; less than four teaspoons can be dangerous to a 10-pound dog.

# Feline Cystitis – (Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease)

Feline Urologic Syndrome (FUS) or Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD). It affects the bladder (not the kidneys), resulting in the production of bloody urine that contains microscopic crystals. The cat often urinates frequently, usually with the passage of only a few drops of urine. This is often confused with constipation.

## What Are Some of the Contributing Factors to FUS/FLUTD?

Some of the factors which are associated with an increased incidence of FLUTD include obesity, decreased physical activity, a diet of primarily dry food, and a decrease in water consumption.

## What Clinical Signs to be Aware Of?

Many cats will urinate in places other than the litter box, and often on hard surfaces such as tile floors, counter tops, sinks, and bathtubs. They should not be punished for doing so. In this situation, inappropriate urination is a reflection of the cat's extreme discomfort and is not a behavior disorder.

Most cats with cystitis exhibit blood in the urine and discomfort in urinating. The discomfort is usually mild but can become much worse if it is not treated. Female cats may develop 1/2 inch diameter stones in the bladder that must usually be surgically removed. Male cats may develop enough crystals in the urethra to cause an obstruction. This obstruction prevents elimination of urine from the bladder. If the obstruction is not relieved within 48 hours, most cats will die from kidney failure and the retention of toxins that were not removed by the kidneys.

**What is the Cause of FUS/FLUTD?**  
We are not sure of the cause of this

problem. Bacterial infections are the most common cause of cystitis in dogs and humans, but almost all cats with cystitis do not have bacteria in their urine. Neutering of male cats and feeding of dry cat food have been proposed as potential causes, but these have been disproved as initiating factors. It is true, however, that many dry foods may aggravate the problem after it begins. A herpes virus has been incriminated and someday may be proven to be the cause. Despite extensive research, the cause remains elusive.

## How Can One Prevent FUS/FLUTD?

Two things should be done to help prevent recurrence.

1) Special diets are available to help prevent this disease. The specific diet is chosen based on the type of crystals present in the urine.

The most common type of crystals present in the urine is called struvite or triple phosphate. These crystals will dissolve in acidic urine. Therefore, acidification of your cat's urine can be a

significant means of prevention. However, if your cat's crystals are not struvite, they are probably calcium oxalate. Acidification may actually make recurrence more likely if calcium oxalate crystals are present. Therefore, if at all possible, the crystals in the urine should be analyzed for their composition. This is the most important step in preventing future problems.

2) Restrict the cat's intake of dry cat food. Though dry foods do not cause cystitis, several studies have shown that the cat's total fluid intake is decreased when dry diets are fed. When the fluid intake is decreased, the urine is more concentrated with minerals and other materials that can cause future episodes of cystitis. Canned foods cause increased fluid intake and more dilute urine.



## Signs Your Pet Has Allergies

Just like people dogs and cats may be allergic to something they inhale, touch or eat but they may not respond the same way we do.

For example, humans allergic to airborne allergens such as pollen typically manifest as irritation to the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and throat. Where as pets primarily experience irritation to the skin.

### What can my pet be allergic to?

Anything. Just like people pets can be allergic to inhaled particles, food, medications, plants, insect bites/stings or things that contact their skin.

**Atopy** – A state of allergic reaction to air-borne irritants. Atopy is the most common form of pet allergy. Symptoms typically appear in the high pollen months, such as August and September, depending on where you and your pet live. Allergies can worsen as time goes on, and your pet may exhibit allergic reactions to additional airborne pollutants as it grows older. What started as an allergy to pollen might grow to include smoke, various molds and even dust!

### Symptoms include the following:

Repeated ear infections or inflamed ears; constant licking of the sides or groin area, which your pet will resume as soon as it can after it stops or you make it stop; (especially in cats) wheezing or respiratory difficulties; chewing and gnawing of the feet; rubbing against the skin of the animals face; (in cats) scabbing of the face; (in dogs) hot spots which continue to appear.

**Dermatitis** – An allergic reaction to substances in contact with the skin.

Your pet might have an allergic reaction to something that touches it, or gets on its skin or hair. Flea bites can also cause skin allergies. Symptoms include: Intense and obsessive scratching; hair loss; appearance of reddish blisters or bumps on less hairy parts of the animals skin.

**Food allergies** – Food allergies are less common in pets than people. The top pet food allergens include; beef, dairy, wheat and fish. Symptoms include: Persistent itching; infections of the skin, chronic except during antibiotic treatment; yeast-related or other ear illnesses; increased bowel movements, soft stool and flatulence.

**Anaphylactic Reactions** – Signs of severe reactions include: hives, facial swelling, and difficulty breathing. These rare and very dangerous reactions can be caused by the following substances: drugs, chemicals, something eaten by the animal or an insect bite. The symptoms come on swiftly, in less than half an hour and you must get your pet treated at once to save it from death. Pet owners whose animals are known to have these extreme reactions should consult their veterinarian for treatments you can use at home or on a walk.

### What can I do if I think my pet has an allergy?

If you think your pet is suffering from allergies then contact your veterinarian to discuss available testing, lifestyle modification and specific treatments. If necessary your veterinarians may refer you to a dermatologist.