

## Keeping an Eye on Your Pet

As responsible pet owners, it is important to recognize the warning signs of a sick pet. The sooner we can examine and treat your pet, the faster it will recover.

Please call the office if you ever have a question or if you see any of these signs:

**\*\*Behavior changes:** lethargy: lack of normal energy or playfulness, viciousness, being overly withdrawn. Some examples of diseases that can cause these signs are viral diseases (parvovirus, corona virus, etc.), bacterial diseases (E. coli, Salmonella, etc.), cancer, metabolic disease (diabetes, hypothyroidism, Cushing's disease, Addison's disease, pancreatitis, etc.), heart problems, nutritional deficiencies, degenerative diseases, ingestion of toxins, and many more.

**\*\*Changes in eating habits:** excessive weight loss or weight gain. Some examples of diseases that can cause these changes are cancer, metabolic diseases (primarily diabetes, hypo- and hyperthyroidism, Cushing's disease, etc.), heart disease, nutritional inadequacies, etc.

**\*\*Changes in water intake and urination:** dramatic increase in water intake and therefore increased urination, straining to urinate or the inability to urinate, discolored urine or very odiferous urine. Some examples of diseases that can cause these changes are kidney disease/failure, urinary tract infections, crystal formation in the urine, bladder and/or kidney stones, diabetes, Cushing's disease, cancer (of the urinary tract, brain, etc.), prostate problems in males, etc.

**\*\*Changes in defecation:** frequent, bloody, uncontrolled or forced stools, loose stools, mucous present, or the inability to defecate or constipation. Some diseases that can cause these signs are viral infections (parvovirus, corona virus, etc.), bacterial infections (E. coli, salmonella, etc.), metabolic diseases (diabetes, Cushing's disease, Addison's disease, liver or kidney disease, pancreatic insufficiency), dietary indiscretion or abrupt change, intestinal parasites, food allergy, obstruction by a foreign body, cancer, ingestion of drugs or toxins, etc.

**\*\*Vomiting:** short periods or continual episodes over a longer period, especially if the vomit is bloody or the animal is weak, in pain, or has a fever (temp. > 103.5 at home). The diseases that can cause vomiting are similar to the disease that cause changes in defecation (see above).

**\*\*Eyes:** redness, excessive tearing, mucus, squinting, or sensitivity to light. Some ocular (eye) diseases that can cause these signs are glaucoma, conjunctivitis (allergic, bacterial, viral), "Dry Eye" (keratoconjunctivitis sicca), eyelid disorders (entropion—rolling in, ectropion—rolling out, blepharitis—infection), aberrant eyelashes or hairs rubbing on cornea (surface of the eye), anterior uveitis, cancer, trauma, foreign bodies, etc.

**\*\*Pain and limping:** pain in getting up or lying down, when you touch them or lift them, or difficulty walking. Some diseases that may cause these signs are DJD (degenerative joint disease = arthritis), spinal disorders ("slipped disc", etc), cancer (usually osteosarcoma = bone or spinal cancer, etc), trauma, fractures, sprain (pulled ligament, like their cruciate ligament), strain (pulled tendon), luxations & subluxations (bones "popping out of joint" like the knee cap), problems specific to younger growing dogs/puppies (panosteitis, osteochondrosis, ununited anconeal process, fragmented coronoid process, etc), nutritional imbalances (rickets, etc.), etc.

**\*\*Coughing:** prolonged coughing (other than single episodes) and sneezing, nasal discharge. Some diseases that commonly cause coughing are heart disease (mitral valve insufficiency, dilated or hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, heartworm disease, etc), respiratory (lung) diseases (asthma or allergic bronchitis, lung parasites, pulmonary edema, aspiration pneumonia, bacterial, fungal, or viral pneumonia, etc.), cancer (lung, heart, or metastatic), tracheal hypersensitivity/collapse, foreign bodies, trauma, etc.

**\*\*Ears:** foul odor, excessive wax, unusual discharge, shaking or tilting head, blood beneath the skin or on the ears. Some diseases that cause these signs are ear infections (secondary to bacteria, fungal/yeast, allergy), ear mites, trauma, foreign body, etc.

**\*\*Fever:** prolonged elevated temperature (>103.5 at home). Many diseases can cause an elevated temperature, such as viruses (feline leukemia, parvovirus, etc.), bacteria (E. coli, salmonella, etc), fungal infections (blastomycosis, etc), tick borne diseases (Lyme disease, rocky mountain spotted fever, etc), cancer, certain metabolic disease (hyperthyroidism, etc), immune-mediated disorders (lupus, pemphigus, etc), drugs or toxins, etc.

**\*\*Lumps or bumps:** swelling or lump on or beneath the skin, lumps that change size, consistency or color, lumps that bleed, abdominal swelling, bumps in the breast tissue or testicular tissue. With all lumps and bumps we worry about benign tumors, malignant tumors, abscesses, granulomas, hematomas, seromas, etc.

**\*\*Skin:** hair loss, baldness, open sores, “zits”, external parasites (fleas & ticks), biting or chewing at one’s self, dryness or oiliness. A few of the many skin disorders that can cause some of these signs are: skin allergies (to fleas, food, grasses, pollens, etc), superficial and deep pyodermas (skin infections—bacterial and/or yeast/fungal), demodectic mange, sarcoptic mange, ringworm, metabolic diseases (hypothyroidism, Cushing’s disease, etc), autoimmune disorders (pemphigus, etc.), skin cancer, etc.

**\*\*Respiration:** difficult or shallow breathing, very rapid breathing. Some diseases that can cause problems with respiration are heartworm disease, heart disease/failure, asthma/allergic bronchitis, pleural effusion (fluid like blood or pus around the lungs), anemia, cancer, trauma, pulmonary edema, pneumonia (bacterial, viral, aspiration), tracheal collapse, foreign body, etc.

**\*\*Convulsions:** stiffening and jerking of the legs, chomping, facial twitching, dazed expression, glassy eyes, confusion. Some diseases that may cause convulsions or seizures are epilepsy, cancer (brain tumor, etc.), electrolyte abnormalities (hypoglycemia, hypocalcemia, acute renal failure, liver disease—hepatoencephalopathy, etc.), toxins (antifreeze, etc), congenital malformations (hepatic shunts, hydrocephalus, etc.), meningitis (bacterial, idiopathic, autoimmune), inflammatory/infectious (viral, bacterial, toxoplasmosis, tick-borne diseases, fungal), etc.

Keep an eye on your pet. If you notice something, bring him/her to see a veterinarian. It is helpful for diagnosis if you can give a full description of what you noticed at home, how long it has been going on and any other changes in your pet’s environment. You can always bring a sample of the stool, urine, vomit, or ear discharge if that is in question. Our goal is to help you keep your pet healthy. If there is ever a question, we would like to be able to tell you that the problem is nothing major rather than waiting to bring in your pet and possibly having more complications.