

## Gallbladder Issues in Dogs

by Linda Snider

I thought I'd look into this a bit as recently my wonderful boy, "Max," had this issue with his gallbladder. *It doesn't matter the age of your dog as it can happen at any time.*

I was lucky because I noticed it right away. Although I didn't know what was wrong at the time I just knew that the dog in front of me was not the "Max" who I knew and loved. He just looked at me with his big brown eyes, was quiet when I got the food out for breakfast and his tail was straight and he was standing away from the other dogs. None of this was like him. He would never refuse food nor water and he was doing both. I took him out to go to the bathroom and he would not do that either.

I scooped him up and took him to Animal Arc Vets without an appointment. They took him in immediately and put him on meds as he was running a fever. The x-ray showed nothing but a dark shadow. Then they did an ultra sound and found out that his gallbladder was a solid mass of sludge.

People get stones and animals get sludge which can thicken up to an almost solid state.

The vet said he needed to go to Guardian Vet. We went there and I was told that "Max" would need to wait until the morning to get his surgery as "Max's" fever needed to come down and his liver count was too high for the surgery at that time.

I was told that it's just like with people—if the gallbladder is removed there shouldn't be any problems unless it ruptured before surgery.

There is always unforeseen risk in any surgery. "Max" had a text-book surgery and recovery. I felt very confident knowing that Dr. Fowler was "Max's" vet as he did a miracle on my girl, "Abby." She was not expected to live and he pulled her though with no complications either.

"Max" came home with four different meds for his recovery. He was on pain meds and antibiotics for seven days, as well as a liver protection pill for 21 days. He was also taking a pill twice daily for 21 days for what the Vet Tec could only say was like a gallbladder replacement until he healed.

He was eating slowly the night I picked him up and by the next day he was eating like normal. The hard part was getting the meds to work with my work schedule and keeping him from running, jumping, and no stairs for three weeks!

I had two exercise pens set up on blankets for him. One pen was in the living room so he would not feel alone and so I could keep a close eye on him. The other pen was ↗

*("How To Introduce Your Dog To Raw Food" cont.)*

placed beside my bed so he'd feel comfortable (as he normally slept in my room) and I could hear him if he need pain meds during the night.

If I didn't do the surgery they said "Max" would have been gone within one to two weeks.

It was well worth it for me. "Max" is doing great at 10 years of age and has been given a second chance to run and play. And play he does!

Do some breeds have a predisposition for this? Well the answer is yes! Shetland Sheepdogs have recently shown to be predisposed to gallbladder disease. Here is a link for you to look at: [www.acvs.org/small-animal/gallbladder-mucocele](http://www.acvs.org/small-animal/gallbladder-mucocele). ☐



## Why Dogs Get Dry and Itchy Skin...

Vets state that most likely a dog's flaky skin is simply due to dry air inside the house (especially if you use gas heat).

Dogs who spend a lot of time indoors during the winter months tend to get these mild skin conditions. It's usually no big deal and olive oil will typically remedy the situation throughout the entire winter season. If your dog has persistent dry and flaky skin, be sure to discuss it with your own veterinarian.

Try adding some olive oil to your dog's dry food a few times each week for a month or longer. As a bonus, this will probably help your dog's coat become thicker and shinier. ☐

## Avoiding The Ouch of Ice Balls on Your Dog's Paws

by Tracie Hotchner

There are many challenges for our dogs in cold winter weather, but people don't always consider the problem of ice balls! These hard balls can form under and between our dogs toes when they go outdoors. When a dog leaves a warm indoor environment and goes outside into very cold temperatures, he can



("Ice Balls On Your Dog's Paws" cont.)

get ice balls on his feet. Because dogs have sweat glands in their toes, the moisture there can form into balls of ice from the abrupt change in temperature. These ice balls can be so uncomfortable that a dog will hop or limp, and they can even bruise or cut the foot pad as they try to walk on the ice ball.

### **Doggy Pedicure**

- To keep your dog's feet comfortable in the winter you'll need to add a cold weather personal grooming chore to your calendar (removing the hair between the foot pads).
- Get a pair of small, round-tipped dog-hair scissors from a pet supply store. They resemble the ones men use to snip their nose hairs, but they're tougher (for thick dog hair).
- Some dogs have hair growing between their toes or the pads at the bottom of their feet. This hair that can cause trouble if you live where there is ice and snow.
- Ice and snow won't be able to build up if you snip the hair tufts from between the footpads.
- To get your dog to enjoy his pedicure (or encourage a reluctant pooch to allow you to handle his feet with the scissors) you can sit on the floor with your dog and encourage him to lie down next to you.
- Have a jar of Halo Liv-a-Littles open next to you.
- With every snip you make with the scissors, give him a small piece of the freeze-dried chicken, beef or salmon.
- Tell him what a good boy he is in a soothing tone of voice, offering him a piece of Liv-a-Little as long as he remains calm and cooperative.
- If your dog cannot lie still for all four feet, try doing one paw at a time and then taking a break to play.


### **Coat the bottom of your dog's feet**

If you live in a very cold climate, you can avoid damage to your dog's footpads the way sled-dog trainers do, by applying a layer of protection to the bottom of his feet.

- Musher's Secret is a brand of foot salve for use in very cold climates, but you can also spread a thin layer of petroleum jelly or aloe gel on the dog's footpads before you head out into the bitter cold.
- You can spray Pam or a generic vegetable-oil cooking spray underneath his feet right before you go out.
- It's advisable to apply the protective layer just outside the door or your floors might get pretty messy!
- Even if your dog licks his feet later, the residue of these products will not be harmful.

### **How to Get Relief from Ice Balls**

- If ice does form between your dog's toes or pads, you can give him relief with a hair-dryer.
- Put the dryer on the lowest warm setting and hold the blower at least six inches away from the dog's foot. Be careful. Do not burn your dog's paw.
- You don't want to heat the dog's foot, only melt the accumulated ice.
- Dry off the melted ice.
- Rinse his feet in warm water if there was any salt or ice-melting chemical on the ground outside.
- Gently rub the feet to get the circulation going.

—Radio Pet Lady Network 

## **Why Does My Vet Tickle, Smell and Kiss My Pet During an Exam?**

by Dr. Marty Becker

Some of the things veterinarians do during exams might seem strange, but those things help them learn about what's going on with your pet.

You know what makes me happiest about veterinary medicine? It's a real hands-on, touchy-feely profession. I've loved animals from my earliest years, and I can't help showing it. I've been known to scratch, rub, sniff and kiss people's pets during exams. Sometimes a pet's owner thinks I've lost my marbles when I hear some music and take hold of a dog's paws and do a quick dance with him, but I'll share a little secret with you—there's often a method to my madness.

We veterinarians need to use all our senses when we examine your pets. After all, our patients can't tell us where it hurts or why they might be feeling a little off. Some of the things we do as we're examining your pet might seem a little unusual (even just plain weird) but they often tell us important things about what's going on with your dog or cat. Here's some of what we do and why.

### **A Little Tickle Goes a Long Way**

We've all seen pets go wild when we find their "tickle spot." That's called the scratch reflex, and you'll see it when you lightly touch, stroke or scratch your dog's side, usually at the back of the rib cage or front of the abdomen. The sensation of being tickled there causes dogs to make a scratching motion, the same movement you might see if they're trying to remove a flea or other irritant. Your veterinarian takes time during an exam to tickle your pet for a good reason: the reaction shows us that the neural pathways and reflexes are in good working order. Lack of response may indicate spinal damage.

You know how your cat's rear end goes up into the air when you scratch the base of his tail? I like to call that "elevator butt" because it gets a rise out of your cat, in a good way. Cats love that sensation for a couple of reasons. One, it just plain feels good. And two, you'll see female cats "assume the position" when they are in estrus, or heat. It's how male cats know females are ready and willing to mate. As a veterinarian, though, I scratch a cat's butt to get this reaction for a very practical reason: if a cat tries to raise his rear but can't, it's a common sign of arthritis in the knees or hips.

### **The Scent of Good Health**

I've written before about how smell is an important part of a veterinarian's diagnostic arsenal. Getting a whiff of your pet's breath, ears, skin and, yes, even his butt tells us a lot right off the bat. Your pet's body, not even his hiney, should never smell bad. (Well, his normal butt odor doesn't smell like a rose, but it shouldn't be gross.) If I flip up his lip, bury my nose inside his ears, or lift his tail and give a



(*"Why Does My Vet Tickle, Smell and Kiss My Pet?" cont.*)

big sniff, I don't want to smell anything rotten or nasty. If I do, it could be a clue that an infection or abscess has set up in that part of the body.

And what about "frito feet"? You may notice sometimes that your pet's paw pads smell like popcorn or corn chips. That's because they're crawling with billions and billions of microbes. If the smell becomes overwhelming, though, your pet's yeast organisms may be out of control. If I give your pet's paws a sniff, it's not just because I love that smell (though I do) but also because I want to make sure no yeast infections are brewing.

#### **A Dance — and a Kiss**

When I hear a favorite snippet of music during an exam, even if it's just from the ringtone on a client's phone, it's not unusual for me to pick up a pet's front paws and do a little two-step with him. Sure, it's fun, but it also tells me about his mobility. If he seems reluctant or stiff, I'm going to check him over more closely for signs of arthritis or maybe an injury that went unnoticed.

And last but not least: why do we kiss your pets during exams? That's easy. We just love 'em.

—VetStreet

(*"Top 10 Warning Signs of Cancer in Pets" cont.*)

Let's look at how these signs present with some of the more common cancers that affect cats and dogs.

#### **Breast Cancer**

Possible signs: swellings or lumps that enlarge; sores that do not heal.

In both dogs and cats, breast cancer can be detected by the pet owner during a relaxing session of tummy rubbing and scratching. Breast cancer starts as tiny, pinhead-size lumps anywhere along the chain of mammary glands found on the underside of the chest and abdomen of your male or female dog or cat (although it is rare in males). Once the tumors reach the size of raisins, they can often be felt as somewhat soft to firm lumps or masses. Any lumps or masses in the mammary area should be evaluated by your veterinarian.

—VetStreet

## **Top Ten Warning Signs of Cancer In Dogs**

*by Dr. Ann Hohenhaus*

Vetstreet Veterinary Board Member Dr. Ann Hohenhaus, who is also a board-certified veterinary oncologist, reviews some of the important signs that can help you save your pet's life.

In a recent article, I compared the common types of cancer in pets with those found in people. My next step, in this article, is to write about how pet owners might recognize signs of cancer in pets, with a special focus on the common types. Some of these signs, such as weight loss and bad breath, may be indicative of cancer or they may signify other health problems. Regardless, they should always prompt a discussion with your veterinarian.

Here are the ten signs that top my concern list as a veterinary oncologist:

1. Bleeding or discharge from any place on the body, such as the mouth, eyes or nose, or in the urine;
2. Change in urination or defecation habits;
3. Sores that do not heal;
4. Bad smell from the mouth or body;
5. Difficulty chewing or swallowing;
6. Loss of energy; reluctance to exercise;
7. Loss of appetite;
8. Weight loss;
9. Swellings or lumps that enlarge;
10. Lameness or stiffness. ↗

## **Ten Touchy Topics To Discuss With Your Vet**

*by Dr. Marty Becker*

Don't be afraid to discuss sensitive subjects like weight, diet and managing behavior issues with your veterinarian.

We veterinarians are always happy to talk to you about your pet's health and answer questions about his care. That's what we're here for, after all.

But sometimes there are difficult or awkward issues that need to be discussed. We might be uncomfortable bringing up these topics ourselves, especially if we're not sure there's a problem, but we can guarantee you that we are happy to talk about them if you introduce the subjects. We never want you to feel as if you can't discuss concerns with us, especially if your animal's welfare is at stake. Keep the lines of communication open, and you, your pet and your veterinarian will all benefit.

#### **We Need to Talk**

**A second opinion**

If your pet has cancer or an unusual disease that requires special knowledge or equipment to treat, your general-practice veterinarian will likely consult with or refer you to a veterinary specialist. However, if this doesn't happen and you feel as though your pet isn't making the progress he should be, don't be shy about asking for a second opinion. A good veterinarian knows that your pet's care is your first responsibility and will understand your desire to get the best treatment information possible.

#### **Money**

We know that money is a concern for pet owners, even when times are good. It's our goal to give your dog or cat the best care, but we also respect your budget. Hear us out as we make our recommendations and then let us help you prioritize diagnostics or treatments, if necessary, to help you stay within your spending limits. We may also be able to help you apply for a no-interest or



("Ten Touchy Topics to Discuss With Your Vet" cont.)

low-interest CareCredit card or suggest other options to help you cover your pet's veterinary care.

Diet

I feed my pets a high-quality commercial diet, and I hope you do as well. If you prefer a home-cooked or raw diet, however, talk to your veterinarian about its components. He or she can help you find a veterinary nutritionist who will work with you to make sure you're feeding a complete and balanced diet.

Weight

It's difficult to tell people their pets are on the hefty side. Often, they don't believe us. If you ask us, though, we'll be glad to help you assess your dog's or cat's body condition and determine whether he needs to shed a few pounds. And it's always a good idea to check with us before your pet begins an exercise or weight loss plan, to be sure he doesn't run the risk of injury or illness from working out too hard or not eating enough.

—VetStreet ☐

## Are You Bathing Your Dog Wrong?

by Shayna Meliker

If bath time is a struggle in your house, you're not alone. Many dogs try to run and hide under the nearest bed when they hear the first gush of bath water, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can improve your dog bathing skills by taking a look at things even the most caring owners occasionally do wrong when washing their pets.

### Common Mistakes Dog Owners Make at Bath Time

Don't ambush him

You know the scene: chasing your dog down the hallway in an attempt to wrangle him into the tub for the much-dreaded bath. Though it may seem like fun, it may also reinforce the behavior of running away from you—which trainer Mikkel Becker doesn't recommend. Instead, calmly coax him to the tub with a treat and reassuring words.

Don't use cold water

Do you enjoy taking a cold bath? Probably not, and it can make bath time really uncomfortable for your dog, too. So use warm (never hot!) water to bathe your dog. And here's another tip: if your dog is nervous about the bath, make sure he isn't nearby when you fill the tub. Dr. Marty Becker says the sound of rushing water may add to his stress, so prepare the bath before bringing him in.

Don't douse your dog's face with running water

We humans may love the feeling of warm water beating down on us from the shower head, but our dogs probably don't. Instead, use a washcloth to clean your dog's face. Mikkel Becker says it's less frightening than having running water splashing over his snout. And when rinsing his neck and the top of his head, hold his nose and chin at an angle ↗

("Are You Bathing Your Dog Wrong?" cont.)

above the water, so it doesn't run into his eyes or nose.

Don't use shampoo for humans

You may have heard that baby shampoo is a proper substitute for dog shampoo, but even shampoo designed for infants has a different pH than what your dog's skin needs. The best thing to do is to talk with your veterinarian about which doggie shampoo is best for your pet—especially in the case of canines who have skin problems.

Don't yell at your pet

Each time you bathe your dog, start by calmly saying the word "bath" before gently putting him in the tub. This helps reduce stress and minimize surprises for your dog at the next bath time. While washing and drying him, lavish him with praise to make it a bonding experience for you two. And when the bath is complete, offer a desirable reward (like a favorite long-lasting chew or food puzzle) so your dog learns that staying calm in the tub results in an extra-special treat.

Don't use a hot blow-dryer

If you've got a dog with hair that needs more than just a towel-dry, a blow-dryer can come in handy. (Keep in mind that some dogs may be afraid of the noise, so be on the lookout for signs that your dog is fearful.) If you're using the same blow-dryer that you use on your own hair, make sure it's on the cool setting, never the heat setting. There are blow-dryers made especially for dogs that blast room-temperature air, if that's an investment you'd like to make.

—VetStreet ☐

You can't  
force someone  
to respect you,  
But you can  
refuse to be  
disrespected.

I may not be the most  
important  
person in your life..  
I just hope that when you  
hear my name..  
you smile and say  
That's My Friend!

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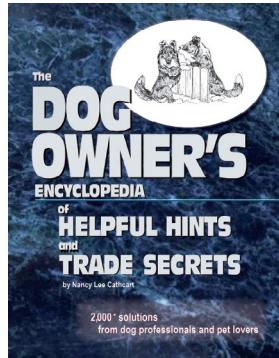
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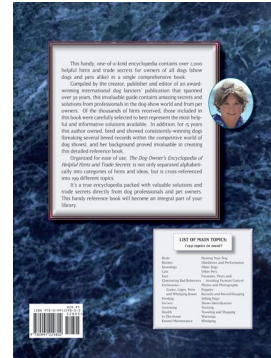


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