

When to Contact Your Veterinarian

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Our pets cannot verbalize whether they hurt or where. But although major cities are seeing an increase in 24-hour facilities for emergency pet care, it is not always an option either geographically or monetarily to run to the veterinarian every time you are suspicious that something is "wrong" with your pet.

So how do you determine if your pet needs a veterinarian's attention immediately? Here are a few examples of situations that would require immediate veterinary attention. Keep in mind that this list is meant only as an adjunct to your veterinarian's advice:

Dogs

Dogs, maybe because they are around us most of the time, usually give pretty good indications when they are not feeling well. There are situations, however, when they are not just sick, but need a veterinarian's attention immediately. Some of them include:

- Trying to vomit and not being able to. This could indicate a serious and often lethal condition called "Bloat." A dog that is doing this needs to be taken to a veterinarian immediately, even in the middle of the night. With Bloat or Gastric Dilatation Volvulus (GDV), the dog's stomach fills with gas and sometimes twists, causing a myriad of potentially fatal conditions.
- Trouble breathing/catching breath
- Not being able to get up/not using back legs
- Straining to defecate or urinate
- Difficulty giving birth
- Experiencing neurological symptoms like staggering, unable to stand, circling, drooling profusely.
- Projectile vomiting and/or having diarrhea and vomiting

- Extreme lethargy (very tired, sluggish)

Cats

- Frequent trips to the litter box and straining to urinate (owners sometimes mistakenly think the cat is constipated). The "blocked cat" scenario usually occurs with neutered male cats and if not resolved quickly, this situation could cause death.
- Experiencing neurological symptoms like staggering, unable to stand, circling, drooling profusely.
- Projectile vomiting and/or having diarrhea and vomiting
- Extreme lethargy (very tired, sluggish)
- Dragging/not being able to walk on back legs
- Trouble breathing/catching a breath
- Difficulty in giving birth

Since cats are a little closer to their wild origins than dogs are, and since wild animals that show illness don't survive very long, cats often don't indicate that they are sick until they are very ill. Signs to watch for include:

1. A normally well-groomed cat that stops grooming
2. Loss of appetite for more than one day
3. Foul breath or drooling
4. Not producing stool
5. Pain when eating: dropping food
6. Erratic behavior or hiding

Seek a veterinarian's advice as soon as you can for these conditions.