

UNDER THE WEATHER

10 Common Symptoms

Delta is a very popular name for Veterinary clinics all over the world. Delta, the fourth letter in the Greek alphabet, means a triangle. This implies that the relationship a Veterinary healthcare provider shares with your pet is not a two-way, but a three-way relationship; with you, the pet parent, making up the third part of the triangle. 'Human physicians', including my husband, are sometimes surprised with the array of diseases vets can diagnose. How do you do it, they ask.... your patient can't talk! We can only do it because the pet parent helps us make the diagnosis by being the eyes, ears and nose of the pet in question. So if a dog's ear starts smelling, or if the cat's urine has blood, or if your old dog cries while getting up, you will be the one telling the vet so that he or she can carry out the physical examination accordingly.

So what are the common symptoms of illness a pet owner should look out for? Here is a list of 10 of the most common symptoms seen in Veterinary practice:

Change in appetite or thirst: This is one of the most common symptom of illness. This is due to a variety of illnesses, including fever, pain, infection, worms... the list is endless. If your pet eats either too much or too little, keep a lookout for other symptoms and take guidance if it lasts for more than a day or two. Increase in thirst can be due to kidney disease, pyometra, diabetes or endocrine disease.

Change in urine colour or frequency: Urine is normally pale yellow in colour. Any change in colour could be due to kidney disease, jaundice, infection. Check if blood in urine happens at the beginning or towards the end of urination. You should also notice if the blood is mixed with the urine or it drops as clots mixed with urine. This could be due to stones in the bladder or kidneys, urinary infection, growths in the urinary tract or renal failure. Change in frequency of urination could mean diabetes, kidney disease, infection or endocrine disease.

Change in stool consistency: You should always check the urine and stool on the pet's daily walk. If the stool colour or consistency has changed, bring it to the vet's notice, it could mean anything from gastrointestinal infections or worms to colitis.

Vomiting: A common complaint. I have lost track of pet parents calling up to say, "My dog is vomiting, what shall



**DR. SANGEETA
VENGSARKAR SHAH**



Pet parents can help us make the diagnosis by being the eyes, ears and nose of the pet in question.

I give?" Vomiting is a symptom, not a disease, and no good doctor treats symptoms without trying to diagnose the disease. Vomiting can be attributed to indigestion, viral gastroenteritis, kidney disease, liver disease, splenic torsion, gastric volvulus, pancreatitis, intestinal intussusceptions...the list is long. A good physical examination will usually tell the vet if it is a routine problem or a potentially dangerous one.

Scratching: Another very common problem... almost every second dog who walks in the clinic has it and the vets in my clinic always joke about quitting if they have to see another itchy dog! The most common cause of scratching is fleas, so look carefully near the tail area. Scratching may also be due to allergies to food, pollen, dust (or dust mites), or scabies, among other things.

Coughing or wheezing: These symptoms could be due to respiratory allergies, infections or heart disease. A thorough description of the cough (dry, wet, honking, hacking) and what time it

occurs (night, after excitement or exertion) will help your vet do the necessary diagnostic tests.

Lethargy: This could be due to fever, infection or endocrine disease. If you see a change in your dog's normal routine, i.e. refusal to go for usual walks, not greeting you when you come home, it is time to take the vet's appointment.

Crying, whining: Your pet is showing signs of pain or discomfort. Can you locate the area of discomfort? Is he tucking his abdomen when he walks? Is he wincing when you touch his leg? Pain is very subjective, and it will help your vet if you observe your pet before bringing him in.

Dull, dry hair coat and skin: This could be due to a skin problem, a nutritional deficiency or a deeper one like endocrine disease, and needs to be addressed immediately.

Change in weight: Any marked change in weight is significant. If your dog has put on weight, it could be due to his diet or a thyroid problem. Neutered dogs or spayed bitches also have a tendency to put on weight, and certain breeds have a genetic predisposition for weight gain. Weight loss can be due to worms, chronic illness or cancer and should not be ignored.

