

UNDER THE WEATHER

Help your vet help your pet

There are two great tragedies in a vet's life. One is knowing that even if you really love animals, that feeling is never going to be reciprocated (would you like someone who poked and prodded you and gave you jabs?) The second tragedy is that your patient can't speak.

And if that isn't enough, there are people who expect vets to have some kind of divine, x-ray vision. Picture this scene, "So Mr. ABC, what's wrong with your cat?" "You should know, Dr Shah, you're the vet!" I often wonder if Mr ABC (and he exists!) would go to his own doctor and say, "Here I am doc, tell me what's wrong with me." Since animals cannot talk, it is entirely the duty of the guardian/pet parent to speak for them and help their vet diagnose and treat their pet's ailments. This will save a lot of unnecessary problems, since diseases in animals can be correctly diagnosed only if an accurate history (information about current and past illnesses) is obtained.

As a first step, the person accompanying the pet must be familiar with the pet's daily routine. This will help answer questions like, "How much did he eat today?" or "What does she normally eat?" or "Does he get tired after his daily walks?"

Some clients send their pets with their help. While that is understandable, considering today's time and traffic constraints, do remember to send a note detailing the problems and a number you can be contacted on in case the vet wants to speak to you. Don't call in advance and discuss your pet's symptoms over the phone. In all likelihood, the vet's mind is on the patient in front of him and may forget some symptoms when it's your pet's turn.

At least for the first visit, in any illness, it is important that the guardian accompany the pet, however busy he or she may be. This will give the vet a chance to discuss the illness, explain it and discuss the future course of action. If the pet parent doesn't look after the pet's needs himself, he should gather the following information before leaving for the clinic:

The pet's diet.

Appetite and thirst.

Colour, consistency and frequency of urine and stools.

Willingness to play and exercise.



**DR SANGEETA
VENGSAKAR SHAH**



At least for the first visit, it is important the guardian accompany the pet, however busy he or she may be.

Present all the information you have to your vet and let him judge what the chief complaint is.

All too often, diseases are not properly diagnosed because pet parents forget to mention what they consider an 'insignificant symptom.' For example, if a pet is not eating and passing urine frequently, the guardian may be more concerned about the loss of appetite and forget to mention the increased frequency of urination, which could be due to a urinary tract infection, which incidentally, has caused the dog to lose his appetite.

Whenever abnormal symptoms are present, it is important to state how long they've been present, whether the pet has been previously treated for the same, and the names of the medicines used previously. Keep all the pet's medical records in a file, including X-rays, ECGs, ultrasound reports and any other diagnostic tests performed. Some vets today keep an online record of your pet's medical and vaccination history. Check if your vet has this facility. On your part, you should make concise notes about the sequence of events in an illness – this will really help your vet, especially in a

complex or prolonged illness (e.g. epilepsy).

All records of the pet's vaccinations should be diligently maintained and produced if your vet asks for them. In situations where there is an abnormal weight loss or gain, keep a weekly record of your pet's weight. Similarly, if there is an abnormal increase in thirst, you could keep a record of your pet's daily intake of water.

When the vet gives a prescription, make sure you understand all the details in it. Confirm the number of days the treatment must continue. On no account should you stop treatment or medication without consulting your vet just because you think your pet is better. Often, illnesses may flare up again if the prescribed course is not followed. If it is easier to medicate your pet in a certain way, either with tablets or syrup, state your preference, so your vet can prescribe alternatives in that form, if available. And lastly, do not follow the well-intentioned auntie's advice and add on medicines that made her dog better – they simply may not work for your dog, or worse, react with his current medicines adversely.

