

UNDER THE WEATHER

Symptoms to Not Ignore: Part 2

Diarrhoea: This could be something as simple as overeating or indigestion. If your pet is otherwise healthy, active and alert, give him light meals for a day and see if it settles by itself. If the diarrhoea continues, it could be an infection, amoebic dysentery, food allergy, colitis or something more serious like obstruction. If diarrhoea occurs frequently, chronic causes of diarrhoea like colitis, food allergy or inflammatory bowel disease need to be looked into.

Change in habits: You know your pet really well, and should be able to tell if there is change in his/her pattern of normal behaviour. If your normally energetic pet is reluctant to go for his walks, he's not just being lazy, he may have fever or it may be an underlying heart disease making him slightly breathless.

Animals that are suffering may also become restless and irritable. If your previously friendly dog wants to be left alone all the time, or your once independent kitty suddenly needs a lot of comfort and attention, consider taking them for a check-up.

Other behaviours to look out for include a pet that can't seem to get comfortable and changes positions or moves to other locations frequently, uncharacteristically urinates in the house or seems to sleep much more than usual.

Scratching: All pets scratch themselves from time to time, and you can ignore an occasional itch. However, if you notice that your pet is scratching a lot more than usual, he might have picked up some ticks, fleas or mites. Make sure your tick/flea preventive programme is regular, and try bathing your pet with a tick and flea shampoo. You'll also need to wash his bedding and any other textiles he has come into contact with in hot water, followed by a thorough vacuuming



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of your house to prevent re-infection.

Other causes of incessant scratching may include dry skin or dermatitis due to factors such as environmental allergies or the lack of essential nutrients. Try bathing your pet with a fragrance-free, oatmeal and aloe based dog shampoo. If that doesn't seem to relieve the itching, try upgrading your dog's food to a high quality brand that's novel-protein based and grain-free. You can also try giving your pet a supplement to ensure optimum nutrition, especially if he is on a home-cooked meal, which can help relieve some skin disorders.

If parasites and dry skin have been ruled out, it's time to make an appointment with your pet's veterinarian, who will conduct a battery of tests to determine whether the problem is bacterial, parasitic or infectious, or the result of an allergic reaction to something in the environment.

Fever: Do not, I repeat, do not ignore or self medicate a fever. There are several

deadly diseases which cause fever, and only an expert can tell what the cause is. Which means, don't suppress the fever, treat the cause. How do you know your pet has fever? If she seems warm to touch and is lethargic, feel the ears. If they are hot to touch your pet possibly has a fever. You can keep a separate digital thermometer for your four-legged family member and learn to take the rectal temperature (your vet will be happy to show you how). A dog's or cat's normal temperature is up to 39.3° C. Anything above 40.3° C is considered a fever. Fever can be because of bacterial or viral infections, tick transmitted infections or even cancer. Your vet will decide what blood tests are needed depending on what other symptoms are present with the fever. Do not make the mistake of giving OTC fever medicines like *Crocina* (paracetamol) or *Brufen* or *Combiflam* (ibuprofen). Although safe for humans, they are extremely toxic to dogs and cats.



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