

UNDER THE WEATHER

The Rain can be a Bane

I'm sitting at my favourite spot by the window, looking at the light drizzle.

Monsoon has finally arrived in Mumbai, bringing with it the heady fragrance of wet earth, the spectacular monsoon foliage, memories of making paper boats as kids, getting soaked on the way back home from college...anticipation of hot *chai* and *bhajias*, and *bhutta*.

But as the saying goes, you got to take the bitter with the sweet...And my medical mind kicks in, reminding me to vaccinate my pets against leptospirosis. For a vet, monsoon brings with it its own array of illnesses. Leptospirosis, maggot wounds, ear infections, skin problems, the list is long.

So let me write about the more common problems in monsoon and how you can protect your pet from them.

Leptospirosis:

This is a deadly disease in dogs caused by an organism called *Spirochaete*, which is neither a bacteria nor a virus. The organism enters your pet's body through urine of infected animals, which could be other dogs, rats or cows. Since sewage water and rain water puddles are everywhere in the city, this disease can claim many lives in this season. Since leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease (crossing the species barrier to affect humans), it achieves special importance. Affected animals show symptoms of fever, lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite, yellow urine or decreased urine. The liver as well as the kidneys are affected, and if not diagnosed and treated in time, it can cause renal and hepatic shutdown and death.

If your vet sees signs of leptospirosis, blood and urine tests will be done to confirm the same. Antibiotics like Doxycycline and Amoxicillin are effective for the disease, if started on time. Supportive treatment like IV fluids increase chances of recovery. Prevention, of course, is better than cure, and modern vaccines can help to prevent this deadly disease. There are four strains of this diseases, so make sure the vaccine includes all four.

Maggot wounds:

Maggots are larvae of flies. Flies, especially the common house flies, can get attracted to the smell of even a small wound on your pet's body. The fly lays its eggs in the wound, which then hatch to form larvae which feed on flesh. These larvae are called maggots. Because they feed on flesh, maggot



**DR SANGEETA
VENGSARKAR SHAH**

wounds can become huge in a matter of days unless attended to immediately.

A maggot wound is treated by giving an injection to kill the maggots, as well as local wound management to kill and remove them. Antibiotics are given if the wound is infected. If your pet has a tendency to get maggot wounds repeatedly, a *neem* spray or *neem* oil massage helps.

Gastroenteritis:

Infections of the gastrointestinal tract are very common in the monsoon. Viral gastroenteritis, caused by the deadly parvovirus or the less virulent corona virus are seen in unvaccinated pets, especially puppies. Very few puppies survive the deadly parvovirus, so make sure your pup gets his gastro shots before the onset of monsoon.

Also remember never to keep your pets food out for more than half an hour before clearing it away, since flies and humidity can spoil food quickly in monsoon.

Ear problems:

Less deadly, but more common are ear infections. Dogs with floppy ears are especially prone to ear infections in the monsoon. Make sure you clean your pet's ear after every bath, and do not allow soap or shampoo to enter the ears while bathing. If your pet's ears are infected, a professional ear flush followed by appropriate ear drops should do the job.

Skin problems:

Fungal infections, itchy skin, pyoderma, pododermatitis, tick and flea infestation...the list of skin problems is long. Most skin problems are compounded by the humidity in monsoon, so make sure your pet's skin and coat is clean and dry. Do not make the mistake of washing your pet's feet every time he comes back from his walks – that is like a prescription for fungal infections of the paws. Wipes and dry grooming sprays are available for that purpose, or you can dip a washcloth in hot water and wring it totally dry before wiping your pet. Spot-on drops or tick and flea sprays should be used regularly to prevent external parasites.

Make sure your pet has access to a place to relieve himself at regular intervals, and that he gets enough exercise at home, like playing with a ball, else it will lead to frustration and boredom. Rainwear for pets is now available in most pet shops, and in the latest styles too, so don't forget to stock up before the season starts!

