



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

There are few problems more frustrating than having a cat that is suffering chronic bouts of vomiting and diarrhea. Vomiting and diarrhea cause dehydration, and if left untreated, can become a life-threatening situation. Therefore, any cat displaying those signs should be examined by a veterinarian.

There are many possible causes of vomiting and diarrhea, but inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is one of the most common causes in cats. The cause of this disease is unknown, but micro-

scopic changes that occur in the gastrointestinal tissues imply that immunologic factors play an important role. Dietary factors, such as food hypersensitivity, may also contribute to the development of inflammatory bowel disease.

Treatment will include dietary management if food hypersensitivity is aggravating the gastrointestinal system. Your veterinarian may recommend a dietary trial of three to six weeks to determine if a food antigen is

responsible; if so, then a simple diet change may provide symptomatic relief.

Because IBD is an inflammatory disease, corticosteroids are usually used to treat cats with IBD. These drugs have potent anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive properties with relatively few side effects. Relapses occur if the treatment regime is not followed.

Blood provides clues to diseases

In medieval days it was believed that if a portion of blood was removed from a sick person, their health would be restored. Within the last century it was discovered that blood can provide important information about an animal's health. Today "blood letting" takes the form of taking a small amount of blood to be analyzed. Because blood bathes the cells of all tissues, it is useful in the diagnosis of infections, metabolic diseases, bleeding disorders, inflammatory diseases, some parasitic infections, and numerous organ diseases.

Blood can be tested as whole blood or just a component such as serum (the liquid portion of the blood) or platelets (used in clotting the blood). Many laboratories offer automated serum chemistry profiles that are capable of doing 20 different tests within one hour.

The next time your veterinarian takes a blood sample from your cat, be thankful that medicine has progressed to the point that the blood is not discarded but is used in diagnosing diseases.

Changing your cat's behavior

One of the first reactions of an owner to his or her cat's misbehavior is punishment. Unfortunately, punishment is usually ineffective because cats do not associate their actions with punishment unless it occurs within a few seconds of each other. More effective behavior modification techniques include aversion, desensitization, and reward. The method chosen should be appropriate for the behavior problem you are trying to correct.

Aversion uses an obnoxious stimulus, such as a strong odor or flavor, to teach

avoidance. It is effective in treating oral behavior problems such as wool sucking or plant eating.

Desensitization works well for managing fear or anxiety by slowly acclimating your cat to what it fears. For example, if it fears loud noises, reduce the level of sound to the point that the cat shows no fear or anxiety, then gradually increase the sound level.

Rewards are used for natural behavior that resembles desired behavior. Rewards can be food treats or stroking the cat.

If you are having a behavior problem with your cat, discuss it with your veterinarian. He or she may provide additional suggestions to help you modify your cat's behavior.

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