



YOUR CAT'S HEALTH, OUR PASSION • VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2015 NEWSLETTER

FELINE BRONCHIAL ASTHMA

Asthma is a condition caused by constriction of the lung's air passages resulting in distressed breathing. Bronchial spasms cause the individual bronchi (the two large air passages that lead from the trachea to the lungs) to constrict or tighten. The resulting swelling in the surrounding tissues causes a full-blown asthma attack—an episode of extremely difficult breathing and/or severe coughing.

Although the exact cause of asthma is not known, it is generally considered a form of allergic reaction. Numerous environmental triggers can cause a feline asthma attack. Some of the most common are:

- Dust from kitty litter or litter additives
- Cigarette smoke
- Household chemicals
- Perfumes and room fresheners
- Pollens or dust in the air
- Mildew or mold

Some asthmatic kitties are susceptible to exercise-related asthma attacks after an intensive play session. Stress can also cause or worsen an attack. (For this reason, you should always remain as calm as possible if your kitty suffers an attack.) Asthma attacks typically recur, sometimes several times a day, although it's not uncommon for many months to pass between episodes, making them hard to predict.

Early symptoms of asthma may be hard to detect. You may hear a faint wheezing, often more noticeable after exercise, and your kitty may seem to tire more easily. Some symptoms of asthma (including coughing and wheezing) may also be associated with parasites such as lungworm or

heartworms. Labored breathing often precedes a serious attack.

Diagnosis of asthma typically starts with blood tests, which can detect infection that often accompanies asthmatic bronchitis. Blood tests are also useful in eliminating other diseases with the same symptoms, or detecting parasites such as heartworm. Your veterinarian may also recommend a chest x-ray that could disclose lung abnormalities, irritation, or infection.

Treatment for asthma varies depending on the frequency and severity of your kitty's attacks. This may include oral medication or the use of a specially-adapted inhaler to help open up the breathing passages and reduce airway inflammation. Environmental triggers often need to be removed, such as scented litters or litter additives, cigarette smoke, perfumes, room fresheners, aerosol cleaners, or carpet deodorizers. A special diet may also be recommended.

If an asthma attack does occur, try to relate it to your pet's contact with household materials or to a change in the environment. Does a certain brand of cat litter seem to trigger an attack? Is there a certain time of year that the attacks typically occur? Did an attack occur when you turned on your heater or air conditioner, or when you used a new type of cleaning product? If you detect any kind of pattern for the attacks, please let us know.

If you've noticed your kitty demonstrating any change in his or her normal breathing patterns, please give us a call to schedule a wellness exam (don't miss our January special offer below). Although there is no true cure for asthma, there are many methods for successfully managing it.

WINTER SKIN AND COAT CARE

During cold winter months when the heater is keeping your home warm, the heated air may be affecting your kitty's skin and coat. Fur that is normally fluffy may become dull and flat, and you may see white flakes under the fur. Your kitty may also be scratching more because of dry, itchy skin.

When you spot dander or loose fur, your instinct may be to bathe your kitty. However, bathing may actually worsen the problem because it removes necessary oils from your kitty's skin and fur. Instead, regularly brush your kitty to remove loose hair and dander. Brushing will help distribute oils throughout the skin and fur, and also encourages circulation.

Good nutrition is also important. A high-quality diet may help improve the condition of your kitty's skin and coat. Nutritional supplements can also help soothe dry, itchy skin. Please ask us for more details.

JANUARY SPECIAL OFFERS FOR OUR READERS

Through January 31, we have two great special offers for you! When your kitty comes to the Sacramento Cat Hospital for a wellness exam, you'll receive a \$10 discount. And if your kitty is tested for heartworm, you'll receive a \$25 discount off the test.

Please stop by our front desk for more details or to schedule your appointment.



Don't miss an issue of our newsletter! Sign up to receive each month's issue by email. To subscribe, just go to www.sacramentocathospital.com, or speak with one of our team members.

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