



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

FELINE CONSTIPATION AND MEGACOLON

It may not be a topic for polite conversation over dinner. In fact, it's something you might not necessarily think about unless something goes wrong. But it's important to pay attention your kitty's colon health.

Feline constipation is relatively common, and can happen at any age. It's more common in male kitties than in females. It occurs when, for any number of reasons, the length of time that it takes for food to travel through a kitty's digestive tract is prolonged. This can result in feces that are dry and hard, and your kitty may not be able to evacuate them. In the most severe form of constipation, known as "megacolon," the bowel becomes enlarged well beyond its normal diameter with hard, impacted fecal material, blocking the passage of both gas and waste.

Symptoms of constipation or megacolon depend upon the severity of the condition. Typically, stool will be reduced or even absent. When it does pass, it's usually hard and dry (although paradoxically, liquid feces may also be seen). You may notice your cat straining in the litter box, or you'll see him or her constantly return to the box to try and defecate. If the straining is severe, mucous or blood may be expelled. Your kitty may even vomit while straining to pass stool. As the condition becomes more severe, your kitty's appetite will likely decrease, and weight loss is often seen. Your cat may become lethargic and dehydrated.

To diagnose constipation or megacolon, your veterinarian will review your kitty's medical history and conduct a thorough physical examination. To help determine the severity of the condition, additional tests may be recommended that can include complete blood count (CBC), chemistry panel, urinalysis, ultrasound, or radiographs (x-rays).

Treatment for constipation or megacolon will vary depending on its severity, how long it has existed, and any underlying causes, but the objective is to remove impacted fecal material from the colon. This may include oral or rectal stool softeners, medication that enhances muscular contractions in the colon wall, IV fluids, or enemas. If the condition is severe, surgery may be necessary to remove the hardened fecal matter.

To help prevent constipation or megacolon in kitties susceptible to these conditions, a moisture-rich diet high in fiber may be recommended. (Please discuss any potential diet changes with your veterinarian prior to switching to a new food.) Ample, fresh drinking water is key. Your veterinarian may recommend nutraceuticals such as probiotics or digestive enzymes or medications that provide a laxative effect. (Never give human laxatives to your kitty, as they can be fatal.) Regularly brushing your kitty's coat will remove loose fur and debris that may otherwise be ingested.

Your veterinarian is happy to further discuss ways to help keep your kitty's colon in good health—and please see our July special offer below.

PETS AND FIREWORKS: AN UNSAFE COMBINATION

While fireworks are a standard part of many 4th of July celebrations, they can cause a great deal of stress—or downright terror—for your pets.

Before the sun goes down and the fireworks begin, make sure your kitty (and all other pets) are inside. To try and escape the loud sounds, pets who normally wouldn't leave their yard may try to "outrun" the noise, ultimately getting lost. (And should your pet somehow escape, it's important that they be wearing identification tags as well as having a microchip.)

Inside, provide a safe place for your pet to retreat, such as a small, quiet room. Closing the curtains and turning on the TV, or playing some gentle music at normal volume, can help keep your pet calm. Special treats or a new toy can also provide a distraction.

The following morning, check your yard for exploded fireworks casings, unexploded fireworks, and other debris. Be sure to pick up and discard all fireworks remnants, as they pose a hazard to your pet if ingested.

JULY SPECIAL OFFERS FOR OUR READERS

During the month of July, we're offering **free trial samples of nutraceuticals** that can help keep your kitty's colon healthy. To be eligible for these samples, your kitty must have received a physical exam at the Sacramento Cat Hospital within the last year. Please ask us for more information.

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.

Sacramento Cat Hospital • 4115 Manzanita Avenue, Carmichael • (916) 488-4161 • info@sacramentocathospital.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SacramentoCatHospital