

For my clients with pets that have frequent diarrhea issues.

When dealing with a pet, you are trying to determine what is going on without the benefit of hearing from the pet what is wrong with them. So, you take them to the vet, who gives advice based on that individual appointment. It is up to you, as your pet's advocate to listen CAREFULLY to the veterinarian and put the pieces together to come up with a viable plan to help your pet get better for the long-term.

As you know, if you read my Winter newsletter, I've been dealing with this type of issue with my dog Tom. Never had an issue with him for the first 18 months of his life. Then, he started to have digestion problems. We went through cycles of feeding him regular dog food (dry mixed with some wet), his stools would get loose and we'd go on to the bland white rice & lean chicken diet. Last fall, that didn't seem to be working and one Sunday his stools were extremely loose and very red, which was alarming to me. Down to VRCC we went, where it was determined he had lower-intestinal distress & inflammation. Following a round of antibiotics he recovered. But, had the same issue again about 6 weeks later, with another visit to his own vet.

I thought it must be a food allergy, so started to work on eliminating things from his diet, with limited-ingredient, easy-to-digest food. Still didn't work, and his diarrhea returned. The 3rd time, I took a stool sample to his own vet for evaluation and some direction on how to proceed. After listening carefully to the tech who actually analyzed Tom's stool sample, I heard her say that his digestive track was "all out-of-whack", that his BAD bacteria far outnumbered his GOOD bacteria, also known as a FLORA imbalance. Below is an article I've copied to describe this condition and how to treat it.

How would these factors affect the intestinal flora and cause health problems?

Antibiotics	Steroids	Bacterial Infections
Food Poisoning	Stress	Poor Diet
Strange Eating Habits (Feces, Soil, Etc)	Drinking unclean water from lakes, ponds, or ditches	Emotional stress (usually caused by change in routine)
Surgery	Boarding at a kennel or pet hospital	Vaccinations

All these factors can tip the balance of the bacteria in the gut, particularly antibiotics which kill off the beneficial bacteria that keeps bad bacteria under control. Health problems are caused because around 80% of the immune system is in the digestive system - it's the home-guard for bad stuff entering the body - so if the gut flora is poor, it affects the efficiency of the immune system. At long last, the benefit of probiotics for your companion animals is receiving the attention it deserves. Probiotic therapy has been scientifically studied and proved beneficial in the treatment of pets with many health problems including diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic renal disease, skin problems and pancreatitis. There are also studies which indicate probiotics positively

Your pet's digestive system must stay populated with a healthy level of good bacteria in order to keep the immune system strong. If bad bacteria overwhelms your pet's intestines, your dog or cat can lose its vitality and become more susceptible to illness, not to mention digestive symptoms. The use of probiotics in humans in the treatment of recurrent urinary tract infections, the prevention and management of allergies, and other conditions, suggests further potential benefits for our four-legged companions. If you have a pet with frequent digestive issues, you know the underlying problem is often difficult to diagnose and can take weeks or even months of trial and error to resolve. Digestive problems can often be a sign of an imbalance of the gut flora, especially if your pet has ever had antibiotics. If your dog is passing a lot of foul-smelling gas or having bouts of diarrhea, it's very possible his intestinal tract is overrun with bad bacteria. You can usually tell if your cat is having digestive problems by checking the litter box for changes to the feces. Cats with digestive issues will sometimes urinate or defecate outside their boxes.

Laboratory studies have shown animals raised either without colonies of friendly bacteria in the gut, or who have a poor balance of good-to-bad gut bacteria, are at high risk of developing disease. Antibiotics and steroids like cortisone are the most prescribed drugs in traditional veterinary practices. Both these drugs can decimate the friendly bacteria in your pet's gut.

Disruption to the balance of the gut flora can cause inflammation in the gut that may lead to increased gut permeability (Leaky Gut Syndrome), which means your dog or cat can absorb partially digested food and toxins into its bloodstream. This can trigger allergies and/or auto-immune disease. Probiotics are good bacteria. They have the ability to re-colonize the digestive tract with friendly bacteria. Holistic vets have been using them for years on their animal patients to prevent and treat digestive problems and a variety of other health concerns. Traditional veterinarians, however, have, until recently, dismissed probiotics as ineffective and a waste of money. However, in recent years studies began to emerge showing specific strains of probiotics were indeed beneficial for dogs and cats with inflammatory bowel disease, gastritis and colitis, as well as those suffering the side-effects of antibiotics and steroid drugs. In fact, the overwhelming research conclusion was probiotics are not only effective, but help pets recover from illness faster and with fewer complications. -end of article-

So, long story short, I did 3 things with Tom, I got him a probiotic from the vet, I switched his food AGAIN to Iam's Low-residue, wet & dry (a food formulated to address intestinal health), and found a product called PERFECT FORM that offers several herbs that are beneficial to intestinal health as well. I found that there are quite a few probiotics on the market that are less-expensive than the brand from the vet, so I have a package of chewables coming. So far, so good, although I've been optimistic before, I'm hoping that this will be the end of Tom's digestive distress. If your dog or cat has similar symptoms, I suggest taking a stool sample to your vet to be analyzed for parasites and ask them for a flora level as well.

## Perfect Form

### Pet Nutrition Supplements

*adj., n. Correct or Precise, Consistence, True to Type, Unchanging, Constant Shape or Formation.*

A supplement to support the normal healthy functioning of your dog or cat's digestive tract. This pet nutrition supplement combats gas, facilitates regularity, firms up loose stools, soothes and protects the GI Tract.

Perfect Form is ideal for pets with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Colitis or occasional digestive upset (diarrhea or vomiting). We recommend using this supplement in conjunction with a grain-free diet for best results.

### Ingredients:

Papaya leaf, plantain, slippery elm, organic pumpkin seed, pectin, papain and fennel.