

Home Treatments **And When To Call The Vet...**

Dogs are likely to have “off days”, occasional problems, or minor irritations. It is not necessary to run to the vet every time your dog sneezes, limps coughs, has a touch of diarrhea or vomits. These things are common problems but usually not major catastrophes. The important things to watch for and to recognize the danger signs that tell you when professional help is needed. Common sense can be your best friend’s best friend.

Don’t administer human medicines or ointments to your dog without first consulting your vet. Though many are safe and helpful, others may not be tolerated by canine systems and do more harm than good.

Some like tired and true patent medicines like Kaopectate and Milk of Magnesia should be part of the medicine cabinet. In fact, it is not a bad idea to set up a medicine chest for you dog. Be sure to include a bottle of hydrogen peroxide. It can be used as an emetic as well as for cleaning wounds. Mineral oil and cotton balls can come in handy for cleaning ears. A rectal thermometer will allow you to check your dogs temperature. You might ask your vet for a plastic medical dispenser for easier doing of liquids. (You can draw them into the dispenser in measured amounts and squirt them into a pocket formed by pulling the corner of the lip near the cheek.) For many years, breeders and kennel owners have relied on Zev, a canine cough syrup, to relieve minor coughing. Another item of importance is a bottle of 91% isopropyl alcohol for sterilizing the thermometer and any other instruments you may use. And when it comes to instruments, a tooth scaler such as your dentist uses can be employed to clean tarter build up from canine chopper. Use care when doing this though, not to damage teeth or gums. As time goes by, you may add other items such as a pair of blunt ended scissors (a safety feature around an active or nervous dog), tweezers or hemostats for removing hair from inside ears, compress pads and adhesive tape.

Now let us look at some of those common ailments and how to deal with them.

DIARRHEA

Loose unformed stools can be the result of stress, a change of diet, spoiled food, a mild stomach disorder, or even garbage consumption. Simple diarrhea can usually be controlled by giving a tablespoon of Kaopectate for every 10lbs body weight and repeating the dose every three or four hours for a day or two. Withhold food the first day but allow the dog to have water. After 24 hours, give the dog cooked rice along with lean hamburger. Then gradually return to normal feeding. Diarrhea may also be caused by internal parasites, food allergies, toxic substances, or certain food diseases. A danger signal is the presence of blood in the stool. Extremely foul smelling, liquid stools are also a warning sign that this condition requires veterinary attention especially if accompanied by other symptoms (pale gums, increased heartbeat, drooling, etc).

RUNNY EYES

Something as simple as hair rubbing on the eye surface or contact with dust or high grass can irritate the eye. One way of avoiding eye injury or irritation is to prevent your dog from riding with his head out of the car window. Keep the eyes clean with warm water and raw cotton. It's time for a visit to the vet's if there is persistent soreness and redness about an eye, or a heavy discharge.

COUGHING

A minor cough now and then is no cause for alarm. It helps to clear the respiratory system. If mild coughing continues, canine cough syrup can usually clear it up. Persistent hacking is another matter. It can be the highly contagious problem known as kennel cough or it could be brought on by other infections, parasites, congestion, allergic reactions, toxic reactions, or even tumors. This requires veterinary diagnosis and treatment.

LIMPING

We all stub a toe or twist an ankle now and then and our dogs are likely to do the same. A dog may favour a strained or injured leg or paw by limping. If your dog starts limping, check first for a cut pad on the paw. Cuts should be cleaned and bandaged. Look for burrs, stickers or other irritants between the toes. Occasionally, rashes or interdigital cysts form between the toes, causing the dog to limp. And there is always the possibility that your dog may have pulled out a toenail. If there seems to be no external cause, check for swelling around the joints. You may use cold gel packs to reduce the swelling. If there seems to be extreme tenderness which could indicate a broken bone, or if the limp persists, then it's time to consult your vet, as soon as possible.

SKIN GROWTHS

You are petting your dog and your fingers find a lump. Should you worry? That depends. Check it out. If it is red and sore, it could be an insect bite. It may even be a tick feasting away on your friend. If it is not inflamed, the lump is probably a cyst or tumor. Cysts are common, especially on older dogs. They are simply growths containing a rather thick material and, if left, are neither painful nor dangerous. Tumors may be malignant or nonmalignant and a biopsy or removal of the tumor may be necessary to determine which is which. Nonmalignant tumors usually remain the same size while malignant variety continues to spread. If you notice a growth, consult your vet.

CONSTIPATION

If a dog experiences difficulty in passing stools, there could be a number of reasons. In some long haired breeds, the hair becomes matted over the anus, preventing the stool from being readily passed – clip hair from around the immediate area. Other causes include eating bones which may splinter, and cause a blockage, or devouring other relatively indigestible items. One lady reported that her Dobe delighted in dining on stolen dish towels. Some food may also cause blockage problems. Mild constipation can be relieved by giving equal parts of Milk of Magnesia and mineral oil – one tablespoon for every 20 lbs of body weight. More severe cases may require an enema and the easiest way to administer are the prepared one that come in a plastic bottle with a long nozzle

and may be purchased at any drug store. If your dog has constant difficulty with constipation, perhaps you should talk to your vet about a change of diet, or even a special food.

VOMITING

Dogs use vomiting as a defense mechanism. If something disagrees with them, they get rid of it. It's that simple. And if the vomit is not accompanied by other warning signals, it's no cause for worry. Because of the construction of a dog's anatomy, vomiting is not nearly as upsetting to them as it is to a man. If it is an isolated occurrence, remove food and water for a few hours and if there is no repeat performance, let him have small amounts of water after a time. Continued vomiting calls for vet intervention. He may first recommend that you first try Pepto Bismal or Milk of Bismuth (one tablespoon per lb of body weight) every four hours. When the vomiting stops, feed broth, a little at a time then add cooked rice and lean boiled hamburger to the diet. Resume regular feed after 24 hours.

SCRATCHING AND HAIR LOSS

Dry skin, parasites, allergies, or skin irritations are all good reasons for scratching. Check for fleas or signs of their existence. If skin seems scaly your dog might need more fat in his diet. You can add corn oil, wheatgerm oil, or safflower oil to the food to alleviate the condition. An allergy might cause rashes or itchy patches. Only your vet can give you the answer to the allergy problem.