

CONSTIPATION

A CONSTIPATED PET EXHIBITS INFREQUENT OR DIFFICULT EVACUATION OF THE STOOL. The feces are usually hard and dry.

There are many causes of constipation in pets. Some are not serious while others can be life threatening. *Correct treatment depends on identifying the cause of your pet's constipation.* **Constipation is most often caused by dietary or environmental factors.**

DIETARY. Fibre in the diet is important for normal defecation. Just as with people. A pet food with high fat and gravy levels may also be deficient in fibre. Substances such as hair, bones, or other indigestible foreign matter will mix with the stool and cause constipation. Hairballs in cats are very common.

ENVIRONMENTAL. Changes which affect an animal's daily routine, such as removal of a cat's litter box (or changing the type of litter), a hospital/boarder kennel stay, or lack of exercise can also cause problems.

OTHER CAUSES OF CONSTIPATION:

- Aging
- Pelvic bone fractures
- Rectal lesions, infections, or tumors
- Prostate gland disease
- Spinal cord problems
- Color disorders
- Hormone imbalances

HOME CARE MANAGEMENT. Diets rich in fibre can be used to aid in the control of constipation just as with people. The fibre increases water retention in the stool and softens it. The increased bulk also increases propulsive movements of the intestines to help with eliminations.

1. Twice daily, feed your pet a diet containing at least 10% fibre. Recommended foods for both dogs and cats include Prescription Diet r/d® or w/d®. These diets can significantly reduce mild constipation.
2. Keep your pet well groomed. This reduces excess hair that is consumed due to the pet's normal licking.
3. Regular exercise, especially about 1 hour after a meal will help stimulate the bowels to empty.
4. Keep the cat's litter box clean.
5. Use mild laxatives or stool softeners as recommended by the DVM. Vetasyl® is a product available at the clinic that works well for both dogs and cats that tend to have problems with mild constipation.