

Dog and Cat Urinary Health:

How the Practitioner Can Uncover the Problems and Set Them Right

By Jeff Nichol, DVM

Preventive care is an important priority to pet owners. And while many are pretty good about reporting symptoms, few are medically trained. Their misperceptions, while understandable, can get our patients into trouble. It's our job to get it right for them; wellness exams need to be thorough

It's complicated. Beyond the dental calculus, skin lesions, smoldering otitis, and lumps there is a lot of pathology we can miss if we don't ask the right questions.

We've all been in a hurry and simply inquired, "How's she doing at home? Active? Eating well? Normal stools?" That actually covers a lot but urinary disease can be left out for some important, and often personal, reasons.

Urine soiling, in particular, is an uncomfortable and embarrassing topic for some people. Many assume it's a behavioral problem, believing that they've failed to properly train their pet. Nobody wants to admit that.

It gets worse. Urinary symptoms are a major destroyer of the human-pet bond; 18.5% of dogs in shelters were surrendered due to house soiling. A rolled-up newspaper can't solve lower urinary tract infections, cystic calculi, or incontinence due to urethral sphincter hypotonus. Punishment won't improve behavioral causes either. A confused or painful pet may get relegated to a solitary life in the yard or relinquished. We need to ask about urine soiling.

There are predisposing factors. Indoor dogs are at higher risk of bacterial cystitis if seldom allowed outside to eliminate. Cats who are crowded and lack adequate environmental enrichments, like tall climbing trees and hide boxes, are at risk of stress-related, inflammatory (nearly always sterile), and obstructive lower urinary disease. Elderly dogs and cats may urine or fecal soil from cognitive dysfunction syndrome. Pets and their owners desperately need our knowledge.

Nearly every female dog who graces our exam rooms has been spayed. As many as 20% of them leak urine in their sleep from urethral sphincter incompetence. It's more common in large breed dogs and those who struggle



with obesity. Ectopic ureters are often comorbid with nighttime incontinence. Twice daily chewable Proin®, an alpha adrenergic agonist, can make a very big lifelong difference.

Veterinarians do a good job of gathering information with careful histories and thorough palpation. Serum chemistries, CBC, and a urinalysis are diagnostic recommendations that today's savvy clients are ready to accept. Radiographs and ultrasounds are not foreign subjects to the general public anymore.

Published research, in both dogs and cats, has shown a marked increase in urolithiasis, especially calcium oxalate stones. With surgery often the only treatment option, prevention of recurrence becomes a high priority to pet owners. Liver-flavored CitraVet® tablets contain potassium citrate to increase citrate levels in the bladder. Calcium then binds to the citrate instead of the oxalate. Other less common stones, such as urate and cystine, can also be controlled.

Recurring lower urinary infections are a huge frustration. Consider adding Cranmate® to reduce the adherence of *E. coli* to the bladder wall, thus improving the effectiveness of long-term antibacterial treatment.

Today's veterinary clients expect more. We can deliver.
