

Urinary Tract Disease in Dogs & Cats

Many Pet Owners can Relate – Personally

by Jeff Nichol, DVM

Have you ever wished our patients could speak a human language? We could diagnose and treat a lot more cases of nausea, musculoskeletal pain, and urinary tract disease. Our work is challenging. Beyond the initial diagnosis and treatment our clients and their pets need us to minimize reoccurrences.

Of the 74 million pet dogs in the US, 80% are kept indoors - with limited elimination opportunities. According to a VPI Top Media Conditions study urinary signs are the #1 reason that cats are brought to veterinary clinics and the 9th biggest presenting complaint from dog owners. A history of house soiling accounts for 18.5% of the shelter population, making urinary signs a leading cause of pet loss. Many of our clients know firsthand the misery of urinary disease. Once they understand the physical causes of their pets' "accidents" they'll be ready to help us make a difference.

Uroliths in pets are a growing problem. According to the Minnesota Urolith Center calcium oxalate has increased to 60% of canine uroliths and 55% of the calculi found in cats. Described as an epidemic, oxalates are now the most common urolith in each species.

There are breed and sex predispositions. Calcium oxalate stones are more common in middle aged to older neutered male dogs. They occur more frequently in miniature schnauzers, Lhasa apsos, Pomeranians, and shih tzus. In Bichon frises it's the young adult males that face a higher risk. While there is no apparent sex predisposition in cats, the ragdoll, British shorthair, foreign shorthair, Himalayan, Havana brown, Scottish fold, Persian, and exotic shorthair breeds have a higher incidence. Idiopathic hypercalcemia in cats and obesity and acidic, highly concentrated urine in either species are predisposing factors.

They're often subclinical but when calcium oxalate cystoliths do cause physical signs they always warrant surgery. Post-operatively these pets need our best efforts at prevention of reoccurrence. Therapeutic diets and potassium citrate tablets, like CitraVet[®] tablets from PRN Pharmacal can make the long term difference.

Chewable CitraVet[®] increases citrate levels in the bladder. According to research from the Minnesota Urolith Center calcium binds to the citrate instead of the oxalate. Urate and cystine stones can also be controlled with the same mechanism. The supplemental potassium citrate in CitraVet[®] also increases urine alkalinity, which can further inhibit formation of oxalate cystoliths.

Nobody's happy with recurring bacterial cystitis either; it's uncomfortable and can lead to struvite stones. Controlling bacterial adherence to the canine and feline bladder wall has been made easier with cranberry extract tablets, like chewable CranMate[®], a cost effective cranberry supplement also from PRN. Components found in cranberry supplements are postulated to inhibit fimbrial adhesion of bacteria, including uropathogenic E. coli. Bacteria are then flushed out during urination.

CranMate[®] is produced by a patented extraction process that eliminates unwanted sugar and oxalic acid - making it suitable for dogs and cats with diabetes mellitus. Pet owners are delighted with chewable CitraVet[®] and CranMate[®] because they are highly palatable and cost effective.

Our work as practitioners is as rewarding as it is challenging. Client buy-in makes it easier to improve patient outcomes. Everybody wins.