

SEPTEMBER 2024



SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon

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PET HEALTH TIPS FOR AUTUMN

Ahhh, Fall! This time of year means football, crisp air, colorful foliage and even, depending on where you live, a little bit of snow. It's a great time to get outside with your pet; for a dog, there's nothing like a romp in the leaves, while for cats, midday sunbeams have never felt better as the days get shorter and the nights get colder. When it comes to keeping your pet healthy and helping him enjoy fall to the fullest, there are some things to keep in mind.

#1. Watch out for ticks in fall

Just because fall is here doesn't mean that ticks aren't still lurking. In fact, according to the University of Rhode Island, many species of ticks are active even into the winter and can survive the first frost. Here are some tips to keep your pet tick-free this fall:

- Don't let ticks cozy up. Eliminate their favorite environments, such as leaf and garden litter, where ticks can sometimes survive even into winter.
- Check for ticks frequently.
- Continue using tick control and repellent products, especially if you spend a lot of time outdoors with your pet enjoying activities like hiking, camping, or hunting.
- Ask your veterinarian about regular screening for tick-borne infections. (The Companion Animal Parasite Council recommends screening annually for tick-borne infections.)

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PET HEALTH TIPS FOR AUTUMN (CONTINUED)

#2. Beware rat poison and other rodenticides

Fall is the time of year when mice, rats, and other rodents start to scurry for warmth. And where do they find it? You guessed it – your home!

Be careful when it comes to mouse traps and rodenticides like rat and mouse poison. Nobody wants an infestation of mice, but many poisons that are currently on the market can be very harmful to dogs and cats. Direct ingestion can be deadly. Make sure you talk to your veterinarian about methods of pest control that are safe for your pets.

Even if you don't have a rodent problem or choose to deal with mice and rats humanely using live traps, you never know what methods your neighbors are using. The carcasses of rodents that have been killed by rodenticides can also be dangerous, so if you see the telltale tail dangling from your pet's mouth, make sure he drops it and keep an eye on him, and if you think your pet has eaten any of the rodent, contact your veterinarian immediately.

#3. There is a fungus amongus!

In some regions of the country, fall is just as wet as spring. That means that more mushrooms dot backyards and forest floors. While most mushrooms are perfectly safe, there's a small percentage that are highly toxic to our furry friends (and to us!). If you think your pet has gobbled up a toxic mushroom, contact the Animal Poison Control Center immediately!



#4. Feed your pet right

It's getting colder out there, and cool temperatures mean more energy is needed to stay warm. You'll probably need to feed your pet a bit more food – food generates body heat, so pets who spend a lot of time exercising outdoors need to eat more than in the summer. However, don't start dishing out more food just yet – make sure you talk to your veterinarian first, as every pet's needs are different.

#5. Watch out for antifreeze toxicity

In preparing for the winter months ahead, people tend to use fall to winterize their cars. This often involves changing fluids such as antifreeze, which can be deadly for pets. Consider this: one to two teaspoons of the stuff can kill a 10-pound dog! Less can kill a 10-pound cat.

Part of the problem is ethylene glycol, a substance in antifreeze that has a sickly-sweet smell that entices pets to lap it up. That's why it's important to clean up spills immediately and make sure your pets steer clear of the garage while you're working on your vehicle. Read our in-depth article to learn more about the dangers of antifreeze and other automotive fluids.

#6. Beware chocolate and hearty foods

The fall and winter parallel our holiday seasons, when we ramp up our intake of hearty, heavy foods and sweets. It's important to make sure your pets don't get into any foods that can make them sick; for dogs, this means chocolate, grapes, and raisins are off limits because they are toxic.

Just because some foods aren't technically considered toxic to pets doesn't mean they're safe. Rich, high-fat foods can cause stomach problems such as diarrhea and gastroenteritis and even more serious conditions like pancreatitis. Also, think about small food items that can be choking hazards, like turkey bones around Thanksgiving. Talk to your veterinarian to make sure you know what's safe and what's not.

#7. Be careful with decorations

Holidays mean decorations! But be careful about leaving irregularly shaped objects and trinkets around the house. While you might like to get into the seasonal spirit, dogs and cats do too – in the form of sampling, say, decorative gourds or other fall props. Eating strange objects can be dangerous and lead to foreign body obstruction.



FIVE CONDITIONS YOU MIGHT THINK ARE HAIRBALLS

If you share your life with a cat, or two, or five, you have almost certainly heard your cat making a very troubled wheezing, coughing, retching sound that you assumed to be a hairball. Sometimes though, no hairball is produced; then you ask “Could it be something else?” Well yes it could. Let’s take a look at 5 things that you may think are hairballs.

1. Asthma

Some cats that we may think have hairballs may actually have serious respiratory problems. Frequent or prolonged episodes of coughing may in fact be the result of serious respiratory conditions such as feline asthma. If you listen closely, you may be able to detect a wheezing sound as the cat exhales. Feline asthma can be treated using systemic corticosteroids or administration of an inhalant medication as is used in people.

2. Feline heartworm disease

HARD describes a lung disease caused by heartworms in cats. Yes, you read that correctly— lung disease. Adult worms, if present, tend to reside in the blood vessels of the infected cat’s lungs. Additionally, developing immature worms can set off a severe, inflammatory response in the smaller lung blood vessels, in the airways and in the lung tissue itself.

3. Foreign bodies

On occasion, a foreign body such as a grass awn or blade of grass will be inhaled and cause a stubborn cough. Many cats like to eat grass and sometimes the blade of grass can become lodged in the throat. This can cause a gagging, hacking cough. Most such foreign bodies will be difficult to see on radiographs. Persistent coughs might have to be evaluated by directly examining the airways using a bronchoscope. This instrument will also allow for removal of the foreign body.

4. Chemical irritants

Sprays, powders and propellants can cause a harsh cough that is similar to that of a hairball. Flea spray and flea powders can be inhaled and will cause sudden coughing episodes. Always cover your cat’s face when using such products.

5. Hairballs

Of course sometimes the cause of coughing and retching is actually a hairball.

Hairballs, known to veterinarians as trichobezoars, occur as a result of cats grooming and swallowing the hair they remove. Many cats spend a good deal of their day grooming. Usually, the hair passes through the intestinal tract, but some cats are more prone than others to accumulating hair in the stomach. Generally, hairballs are harmless but not always.

What do cats do when they have a hairball? Generally your cat will crouch with her neck extended, hacking and gagging in distress until she vomits up the offending wad of hair.

Treatment of hairballs involves regular grooming and the use of lubricants to help hairballs pass.

How can you know if it’s a hairball or not?

If your cat coughs, and particularly if a hairball is not produced, it is important to have your veterinarian evaluate the cough to determine its cause, and do whatever is possible to control the cough. See your veterinarian regularly and remember that whether your cat has a cough or not, it is recommended that you use year-round heartworm prevention. *Written by Dr. Mike Paul, DVM*

“I don’t think twice about picking up my dog’s poop, but if another dog’s poop is next to it, I think, ‘Eww, dog poop!’” - Jonah Goldberg

ACOC Birthdays

Bre - 9/3

Jessi - 9/4

Dr. Tom - 9/28

