

Village Veterinary Practice



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E-Newsletter

Channel Pet's Need to Scratch and Chew

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House Calls Available

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Shredded tissues. Destroyed shoes. A gnawed coffee table. These are just a few of the things I have come home to after leaving my puppy unattended. Similarly many cat owners discover that their couch or curtains have been shredded by sharp claws. A hassle for you and a potential danger for your pet, chewing and scratching are behaviors that should be addressed.

Dr. Kelly Ballantyne, a veterinarian at the University of Illinois Chicago Center for Veterinary Medicine, says that chewing for dogs and scratching for cats are behaviors that we should expect from our four-legged friends.

"These behaviors should not be discouraged but directed to appropriate objects," she says. Starting when your pet is young, you need to supervise your pet so that you can direct him to chew or scratch the appropriate items. For puppies and adult dogs, you can do this by providing them with chewable toys. If you are not able to supervise your dog, Dr. Ballantyne recommends confining him to a crate or pen with chew toys to prevent the destruction of household items. The chew toys should be durable, to prevent your dog from biting pieces off that could be swallowed, leading to potential intestinal issues. Strong, rubber toys with depressions or cavities in which you can place food or treats can also help to encourage your dog to chew on those items specifically.

For kittens and cats, you should provide scratching posts in multiple locations to encourage scratching of those items rather than your furniture. Any given cat may differ on its scratching preferences, so Dr. Ballantyne advises that you try various set-ups to determine what your cat prefers. You can place a post vertically or horizontally and in several locations of the house. The key is that the material of the post be shreddable, because cats use their scratching as a means of visual communication.

"Cardboard scratching posts are inexpensive and typically well-liked," Dr. Ballantyne recommends. "You can also attach toys to the post, or place catnip around the post, to encourage investigation and scratching."

Channel Pet's Need to Scratch and Chew

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Many pet owners have trouble directing these behaviors to the appropriate outlets. Until your pet can be trusted on its own, confinement to a crate or small "pet-proofed" room can save you a lot in the way of destroyed objects. Dr. Ballantyne says that such confinement can prevent reinforcement of the inappropriate behavior, and will likely allow your pet more freedom as an adult.

When pets continue to chew or scratch inappropriate objects, you should consider what you are providing them with as an outlet and how you are presenting it. For example, if you give an old shoe to a dog to chew on, he will learn that chewing on shoes is okay and may also chew on your brand new pair. Only items that are specifically for chewing should be provided.

If your cat continues to scratch a piece of furniture despite access to scratching posts, you can also place the post directly in front of the location where the cat has been scratching. Then the cat will be more likely to scratch the post than the piece of furniture. If your cat seems to have an affinity for a particular material, you can cover a scratching post with a similar material to encourage the scratching in a more appropriate location.

You may also need to take a look at your pet's personality overall. Some pets may be overly destructive for other reasons. If the destruction takes place primarily when you are away from the home, your pet may have separation anxiety. Puppies and kittens (as well as high-energy adult animals) can also be more likely to chew or scratch destructively if they don't have appropriate outlets for their energy. Increasing the amount of exercise and mental stimulation your pet gets daily may also help in preventing such destructive behaviors.

In the long run, the effort to train your pet and to provide him with appropriate chewing, scratching, and energy outlets could save you a lot of heartache and money related to destroyed household items and emergency veterinary bills.

For further information on appropriate chewing and scratching, please contact your local veterinarian.

Julia Disney
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Fanconi Syndrome—A VVP Case by Dr. Green

When a relatively healthy four year old Cock-a-Poo named Shenzi began having an increased water intake, increased frequency of urination and urinary accidents, it was time to visit the veterinarian.

An exam was performed and Shenzi was found to be in good physical health. Lab-work was then necessary to determine if there were any internal problems that would be causing her to drink more and urinate more.

A urine sample was collected and analyzed. The first abnormality seen with Shenzi's urine was the presence of protein and bacteria, which indicated a urinary tract infection.

Another abnormality seen with the urine was the significant presence of glucose. Typically, patients with glucose present in their urine also have an excess amount of glucose (sugar) present in their blood, which most often leads to a diagnosis of Diabetes Mellitus.

A complete blood panel was submitted to the laboratory to

evaluate internal organ function and check for diabetes. In the meantime, Shenzi was sent home on antibiotics for her urinary tract infection and pain medication to keep her comfortable.

The lab results came back normal. Shenzi did not have diabetes because her blood glucose

trate the urine) was now low.

With this combination of symptoms and an unclear diagnosis, Shenzi was referred to an internal medicine specialist. The specialist reviewed Shenzi's history, performed his own physical exam and rechecked the labwork.

After reviewing all the pieces of Shenzi's case, the specialist traced the problems back to the chicken jerky dog treat Shenzi was eating.

The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has received complaints regarding chicken jerky treats that are made in China. After checking

the packaging, Shenzi's owners found out that their treats had in fact been made in China.

These treats caused a problem in Shenzi called Acquired Fanconi Syndrome which is a disease that affects the tubules of the kidneys. Essentially, the tubes within the kidneys begin to leak. In Shenzi's case, protein and glucose were being lost through these leaking tubes, and the excess was coming out in her urine.

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Why does a four year old dog begin drinking more water than normal and develop urinary problems?
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levels were normal. Shenzi's owners were asked to bring their dog back in 2 weeks for a follow up.

At the follow up appointment, Shenzi was still drinking more and urinating more than normal. Otherwise, no other problems were reported by the family. The physical exam was normal, however, protein and glucose were still present in Shenzi's urinalysis. Additionally, Shenzi's urine specific gravity (a number which measures how well the kidneys are working to concen-

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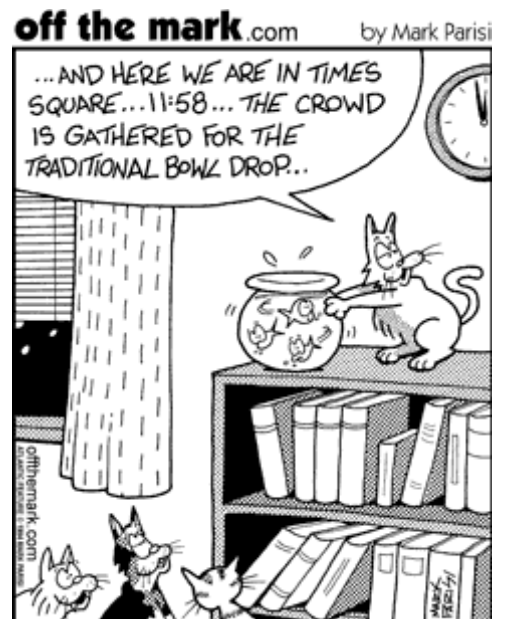
There was no specific treatment indicated for Shenzi at this time. Her owners were instructed to discontinue the treats and continue to monitor their dog. With the removal of the treats, the problem may resolve on its own, however, some dogs have unfortunately been known to develop permanent chronic kidney disease.

After stopping the treats and several urine rechecks later, we are happy to report that Shenzi is doing very well. Her most recent urine test indicated no glucose or protein in the urine! Shenzi will continue to be monitored by her diligent owners and her veterinarians, but overall has a good prognosis.

Shenzi's case clearly illustrates that a couple of abnormal symptoms can be a result of a considerable problem. If you as an owner feel there is something wrong with your pet, then you are probably right, and Village Veterinary Practice is here for you to investigate and treat those problems.



Be sure to visit the VVP website (www.villageveterinary.com under the *Resources* section) to view Pet Care Videos that offer general information, tips, and techniques that may help you with the at home care you provide your pet.



Winter
Weather
TIP

Winter is here and Chicago's bitter temperatures have filled the air. Remember that even though your pet has a built in fur coat he or she gets cold too! When exercising with your pet in cold weather you are the thermometer; if you are cold your pet is probably cold too. Your pet should not be exposed to temperatures lower than 45° F for more than 45 minutes.

While our furry four-legged friends can generally tolerate lower temperatures better than we can, the cold still creates many of the same concerns as in humans. Concern for frostbite is heightened in wet and windy conditions and commonly affects the feet, tail, ears and nose. So bundle up out there and stay warm!



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The Village Veterinary Practice Vision

Village Veterinary Practice was founded with the belief that companion animals deserve the best quality of life possible. Our vision is inspired by our patients, the devotion of their human families and the commitment of our veterinarians. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a strong tradition of providing unsurpassed veterinary care for companion animals.

The Village Veterinary Practice Mission

Village Veterinary Practice was established to care for your pet as a family member. By utilizing the latest medical advances, sound guidance and desire, we strive to make the family pet bond an enjoyable, healthy and life enriching experience.