



OAK FOREST Veterinary Hospital



Pet Talk

Spring 2023



The Risks of Resource Guarding

How Should Dog Owners React?

Guarding their food, toys, beds, and even their people from other animals or humans is normal behavior for dogs. They assume that an approaching person or animal intends to take away a high-value item. Although most adults know not to bother dogs when they are eating or try to take toys away, when children are involved, resource guarding can get out of hand.



Their reactions can range from relatively harmless behavior such as running away with an item or growling, to aggressive behavior such as biting, lunging or chasing others away. Other body language to look for is lifting the lips, showing teeth, stiffening of the body or a hard stare. Children are more likely to be bitten because they don't recognize the warning signs.

Punishing, yelling at or other attempts to "dominate" dogs that are guarding resources rarely works and is an unwise course of action. This can worsen the problem, hurt your relationship with your pup, and result in someone being injured. Instead, experts use desensitization and counterconditioning to change how a dog perceives the situation. It involves slowly training them that someone else approaching the space or item is not a threat.

Be sure to let us know if this behavior is new, since sudden aggression can stem from a medical condition. If you think your dog may bite you, don't attempt to resolve a resource guarding issue without help. We will be happy to refer you to a specialist who can help.

Goose Honks

What's Up with E-Collars?

Hi! It's me, Goose! I have been going with Mom a lot to the vet hospital recently. I like it a lot. I love my Mom. I love watching her work. I keep seeing these pets with huge collars around their necks. I know what they are because Mom puts one on me fairly often. Sometimes, even when I am scratching an itch.

Mom says these are called Elizabethan collars (also known as an E-collar or the cone of shame) and it is a plastic or fabric hood or cone that helps protect injuries or wounds from further damage. I imagine it gets great TV reception. I know that it's normal for dogs to lick their wounds, but mom says this can delay healing or even lick out sutures, which means she gets to see your pet again.

I get used to the collar after a few hours, just like most dogs and cats do. Mom says you can ease the transition by keeping your dog in a confined space where there are no small movable objects such as stools, chairs, and tables which would move if knocked. Sometimes, changing from a hard plastic to a soft collar or donut collar helps too.



A correctly sized collar should allow for normal feeding and drinking. If your dog refuses to eat with the collar on, try offering food in a shallow dish or plate. If you feel you must remove the protective collar, make sure your dog is supervised, and replace it as soon as the meal is finished.

Mom just went into an exam room. I'm going to check out the TV reception when I have a collar on . . .

Goose

Stress and Disease

How Cortisol Affects Your Pet's Health

Just as uncomfortable situations can cause stress for people, it can have a similar effect on pets—especially with repeated exposure to the same unpleasant stimuli. This can include noises, new routines, new people, the absence of a "pack member," boredom, or loneliness.

As with humans, stress increases the levels of cortisol in the blood to prepare your dog or cat for its natural "fight or flight" response. Unfortunately, prolonged periods of heightened cortisol levels can take a toll, causing elevated blood pressure that can lead to cardiovascular disease and elevated blood sugar leading to diabetes.

Excess cortisol can also disrupt the functioning of the immune system, triggering maladies such as asthma, arthritis, skin conditions, allergic responses, and imbalances in normal bacteria levels leading to infections. Addison's disease and Cushing's disease are other conditions related to cortisol imbalances. Other illnesses exacerbated by stress can include kidney disease, colitis, and hemorrhagic gastroenteritis—an acute illness characterized by bloody diarrhea.

Call us if your pet seems stressed and exhibits any of these symptoms:

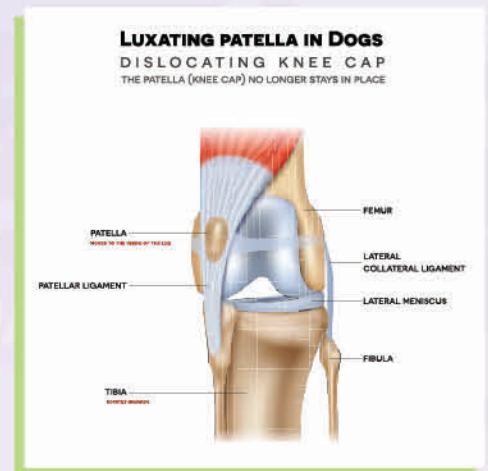
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Skin reactions
- Houstraining accidents
- Excessive barking or meowing
- Irritability or nervousness
- Depression
- Sudden destructive or aggressive behavior

Be watchful for the signs of stress whenever changes occur in your pet's life. The keys to reducing anxiety remain the same in any situation: a consistent routine, plenty of exercise and lots of companionship.

Luxating Patella:

A Common Knee Problem in Toy Breeds

A dog's knee joint has many working parts, which means there's a lot that can go wrong. One of the most common knee problems in dogs is luxating patella, also called a "floating" knee cap. This happens when the patella (knee cap) on either or both hind legs moves out of the normal position and drifts or "luxates" toward the inside or outside of the knee.



Although any dog can be affected, the condition is most often seen in toy breeds and luxates to the inside. Luxations to the outside are less common and are most often seen in Newfoundlands. This condition can occur due to an injury; however, it is usually hereditary.

A dog with a luxating patella may appear to limp or skip temporarily and then go back to walking or running normally. There are four grades of luxation. Dogs usually start with a grade I or II and may never worsen to grade III or IV. Your veterinarian will monitor the condition and will recommend surgery if it progresses to a higher grade. Surgery is the only cure and is usually effective at relieving your dog of chronic pain once the healing process is complete.

The condition can also predispose a dog to a painful ligament rupture, in which case surgery must occur right away. Knee problems can be agonizing for our four-legged friends. Be sure to contact us if your dog is limping or shows other signs of lameness.



Call us at (713) 682-6351 today to make an appointment!

Giardia in Pets Preventing Infection

Among the host of other parasitic infections pets are susceptible to, Giardia is a fairly common one you can help prevent. Giardia are single-celled organisms with whip-like tentacles called flagella. They attach themselves to the intestines of infected cats, dogs, humans and other animals. Separate species of Giardia infect different species of animals. This means that pets rarely infect humans or vice-versa, and specific Giardia species are also unlikely to cross between dogs and cats.

Giardia exists in two forms: the trophozoite and the cyst. Trophozoites live within the host, propelling themselves until they attach to the intestines. As they approach the colon to be passed in the feces, some trophozoites develop a shell to become cysts. Cysts are the contagious form, and they live in the environment outside of the host. They can survive for months in water or soil before finding a new host where they shed their shells and begin the cycle again.

Typically, pets ingest the cysts by drinking contaminated water or licking themselves after being exposed to contaminated feces or soil. Symptoms of Giardia infection include diarrhea, gas, abdominal discomfort, nausea, and vomiting; however, some infected pets are carriers who don't exhibit symptoms.

We can test for Giardia with a fresh fecal sample, although false negatives can occur. There is currently no vaccine against Giardia. Treatments are effective but recontamination can easily occur. The only way to prevent reinfection is to disinfect your pet's environment. This includes washing their bedding and disinfecting any hard surfaces your pet has had contact with, then bathing your pet before returning them to a clean environment.

You can protect against Giardia by keeping pets away from outdoor water sources and areas where other animals may have left feces. When gardening, wear gloves, then wash your hands thoroughly as well as your clothes to prevent transporting the cysts to your pets.



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