

# WOODVALE PARK

## VETERINARY HOSPITAL



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## DIARRHOEA

**DEFINITION:** Strictly the term diarrhoea involves:

1. unformed faeces
2. an increase in frequency of defaecation
3. an increase in volume of faeces

If your dog is only passing soft faeces once or twice a day, although abnormal it is strictly not diarrhoea but merely looseness of the bowel.

### What causes diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is not a disease; rather, it is a sign of many different diseases. Many mild cases of diarrhoea can be resolved quickly with simple treatments. Others are the result of fatal illnesses, such as cancer. Even diarrhoea caused by mild illnesses may become fatal if treatment is not begun early enough to prevent severe fluid and nutrient losses.

### How serious is diarrhoea in dogs?

We attempt to determine how sick the dog has become as a consequence of the diarrhoea. When the dog is systemically ill (i.e., more than one body system is involved), some of the following may be noted:

- Vomiting
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- High fever
- Lethargy
- Bloody and/or watery diarrhoea

### What types of tests are performed to find the cause?

If diarrhoea is associated with several of the above signs, we perform a series of tests in the hope that a diagnosis can be made. This permits more specific treatment. Diagnostic tests may include radiography (x-rays) with or without barium, blood tests, bacteriological cultures, biopsies of the intestinal tract, and exploratory abdominal surgery. Once the diagnosis is known, treatment may include special medications and/or diets, or surgery.

If your dog does not appear systemically ill from diarrhoea, the cause may be less serious. Some of the minor causes of diarrhoea include stomach or intestinal bacteria or viruses, intestinal parasites, and dietary indiscretions (such as eating garbage or other offensive or irritating materials). A minimum number of tests are performed to rule out certain parasites and infections. These cases may be treated with drugs to control the motility of the intestinal tract, drugs that relieve inflammation in the intestinal tract, and, often, a special diet for a few days. This approach allows the body's healing mechanisms to correct the problem. We expect improvement within 2-4 days; if this does not occur, a change in medication or further tests are done to better understand the problem. Please keep us informed of any lack of expected improvement so that we may manage the situation properly.

## **DIARRHOEA QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Has your dog got diarrhoea?
  - a) is the faeces unformed
  - b) greater volume than normal
  - c) occurring more frequently
2. How long has the diarrhoea been present?
3. Is the diarrhoea more severe now than a few days ago?
4. Circle the letter of each item that applies:

### **Consistency**

- (a) Watery faeces
- (b) Stool is the thickness of pancake batter

### **Blood**

- (a) Very bloody faeces
- (b) Only sporadic blood present
- (c) Blood not present in faeces
- (d) Bright red blood present
- (e) Dark, tarry blood present

### **Degree/Frequency**

- (a) Entire faeces is soft or watery
- (b) Only portions of the faeces are soft or watery
- (c) Diarrhoea with each bowel movement
- (d) Diarrhoea is sporadic (some bowel movements are normal)
- (e) Only 1 or 2 bowel movements per day
- (f) More than 4 bowel movements per day

## **Colour**

- (a) Stool is dark brown in colour
- (b) Stool is very pale in colour
- (c) Stool is black and tarry in appearance

## **Miscellaneous**

- (a) Thick mucus or pieces of tissue present in faeces
- (b) Loss of bowel control (defecates in the house on the floor)
- (c) Straining when having a bowel movement or squatting unproductively.

## **Is your dog's appetite normal? If not, is it eating at all?**

What have you been feeding your dog during the last week? (Include dog or cat foods, treats, table foods, milk, and anything else that it gets on a daily basis. Also state what percentage of the diet is in each item or category.)

## **Does your dog have access to foods other than what you feed it? If so, what?**

1. Has there been a significant diet change in the last few weeks? If so, does that correspond with the onset of the diarrhoea?
2. Is your dog as active as normal?
3. Describe any change in water consumption (up or down).
4. Has vomiting been occurring? If so, how frequently and for how long?
5. Does your dog go outside your house?
6. Does your dog go outside your garden ?
7. Could your dog have access to rubbish bins, either within your house and garden or in some other place?
8. Does your dog have toys that it plays with that could have been swallowed?
9. Does your dog have access to sewing materials, such as thread or needles, or rubber bands, or string?
10. Do you have other dogs or cats that live with this one? If so, do the other pet/s have diarrhoea?
11. Do any of the members of your family currently have a diarrhoea problem?
12. Please leave a contacting telephone number where we may reach you today if we need to discuss anything further.