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STRESS IN OUR DOGS – Common Triggers and Sign

By: Jacqueline Neilson, DVM, DACVB

It can be hard to believe that our pampered pooches may be stressed. After all, they don't have 40-hour-plus workweeks, project deadlines, commutes in heavy traffic, teenagers, mortgage payments, or credit card bills!

However, while their stressors may not be the same as ours, research has established that dogs can and often do experience stress, and that stress may compromise their overall health and welfare.

Research has also revealed the influence of the brain-gut connection: the release of norepinephrine (the "fight or flight" hormone) affects gastrointestinal physiology, which often results in digestive upset and diarrhea. This can create yet another stressful experience for your dog and for you – house-soiling!

Some dogs may only experience short lived stressors, but other dogs may live with chronic stress. Contact your veterinarian to schedule a consultation in which they can help you become more aware and gain a better understanding of your dog's stress triggers, related behaviours, and consequent physical symptoms.

Some common stress triggers for dogs include:

1. **Novelty** – exposure to new items, new people, new animals, etc.
2. **Loud noises** – fireworks, thunderstorms, etc.
3. **Changes in housing** – moving to a new home, boarding, etc.
4. **Changes in household members** – new baby, new pet, loss of pet or human, houseguests, etc.
5. **Changes in household routine** – new job schedule, kids returning to school, holidays, etc.
6. **Punitive training methods** – shock collars, yelling, hitting, etc.
7. **Invasion of personal space** – disruption when resting, hugging, kissing, forcibly restraining, etc.
8. **Lack of outlets for normal breed behaviours** – herding, running retrieving, etc.
9. **Separation from human family members** – separation anxiety, etc.
10. **Poor (strained) relationships** with other household members (pets or humans).



Strategies for stress management

Many dogs enjoy a “spoiled” lifestyle complete with plush beds, tasty treats, and lots of affection. But, despite these comforts and care, they also often experience stress.

Thunder, fireworks, a new baby, or other changes in a household can all have an impact on your dog. Beyond mental distress, these stressful events can have an influence on your dog’s physical health. They can lead to significant digestive upset, with vomiting and diarrhea.



If your dog appears to be experiencing stress, you should contact your veterinarian to schedule a consultation in which he or she can fully examine the situation. Your veterinary team is uniquely qualified to make a diagnosis and prescribe a comprehensive treatment plan for your pet.

Your veterinarian may recommend some combination or all of the

following stress management strategies for your dog.

- 1. Take steps to ensure your pet’s and family’s safety** – If your pet attempts to escape or run away during a stress trigger, it is best to move your pet to a secure location. And if your dog exhibits an aggressive response, it should be physically segregated from any potential targets for its aggression.
- 2. Avoid punishment of a dog showing signs of stress** – Not only is punishing a stressed or anxious animal inhumane, it is likely to increase the dog’s stress.
- 3. Identify and manage stress triggers** – while altogether eliminating stress triggers would be the ideal solution, it is often not feasible. For example, you can’t control thunderstorms.

But even when a trigger is unavoidable, you can minimize its impact through environmental modification. For example, during a thunderstorm, you can move your dog to an internal room and play background noise.

- 4. Start a behavioural modification program** – You can work to desensitize your pet to a stress trigger by exposing him to a modified trigger stimulus, starting at a very low level and gradually increasing the intensity. Another strategy is counterconditioning: influencing your dog to respond to a trigger in a positive way, feeling

relaxed instead of stressed. This can be accomplished by pairing exposure fibre and ginger to reduce the risk of stress-related digestive upset in dogs up to 14kg.

- 5. Feed your dog clinical nutrition formulated for stress symptoms** – Your veterinarian may also recommend a change in diet, introducing a food like Hill’s Prescription Diet™ i/d™ Stress to help manage stress-related digestive upset. Hill’s Prescription Diet™ i/d™ Stress is a highly digestible nutritional solution formulated with hydrolysed casein, prebiotic fibre, and ginger to reduce the risk of stress-related digestive upset in dogs up to 14 kg.
- 6. Consider lifestyle changes to reduce stress** – Just as in humans, regular exercise may contribute to overall stress reduction in your dog. Acupuncture or touch therapy may also be helpful.

There are also a number of helpful products on the market to reduce stress, such as pheromones and gentle pressure body wraps. During your consultation, your veterinarian might also discuss possible drug therapies.

Source: [2015 Hill’s Pet Nutrition Pty Ltd](#)

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Snail Pellet Poisoning

Snail bait poisoning, also known as 'shake and bake syndrome', occurs when pets ingest snail or slug bait that contains the drug Metaldehyde, Carbamate (Methiocarb) or iron-EDTA. The bait may be eaten directly from the packet or from where it has been applied around plants in the garden. It is a relatively common poisoning seen in veterinary practice.



Pets will readily eat baits made from Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) since it is often combined with food products such as soy beans, rice, oats, or apples to attract the snails and is formulated in pellets which can resemble dog food. Snail baits are also available as liquids and powders that can get onto paws and be

licked off in normal grooming. All species are susceptible to Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) poisoning (lethal dose 100-300 mg/kg), but dogs are the species most frequently poisoned. Iron-EDTA can cause liver failure due to excess iron in the body.

Very little snail bait is required to cause poisoning, less than a teaspoon per 4.5kg of body weight. Therefore, you should only store and apply this product in areas where your pets (or children) cannot possibly have access. Many products also contain insecticides that make them even more toxic, therefore, it is very important that you provide as much detail as possible about the animal's exposure and about the environment. Be specific regarding brand names and bring product labels or containers with you to your appointment.

Many brands claim to be pet friendly, do not mistake this for being "safe" for pets, it generally means that a bittering agent has been added into the product to try and deter pets from eating the pellets.

Signs of poisoning

Signs of poisoning begin fairly quickly after the poison is consumed. The dog will begin anxious twitching at first only slightly and then uncontrollably. Other signs include salivation and unsteadiness. This progresses to seizures and potentially to death. The muscle contractions of the twitches raise body temperature so high that brain damage can result. Patients can also exhibit racing heart rates, vomiting,

diarrhoea, and rigidity, and respiratory failure. A liver failure syndrome can also occur in some patients approximately 2 to 3 days after poisoning so it is important to seek veterinary treatment even if you feel the twitching isn't escalating.

Making the Diagnosis

Generally, the appearance of the twitching patient is characteristic even if there is no known history of snail bait exposure. The vomit, stomach contents, or blood can be analysed for Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb). However, since it may take several days before results are available, your veterinarian will have to make a preliminary diagnosis based on the history and signs. Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) baits are usually green or blue in colour and may be identified in either the patients vomit or diarrhoea.

Treatment

There is no direct antidote for Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) toxicity; treatment is aimed at controlling the clinical signs. Main stay therapy is to eliminate the toxin from the body through gastric lavage, enema or IV fluids. In certain circumstances it may be possible for a Vet to induce vomiting however this should never be attempted at home as stimulation involved in inducing vomiting may not be in the patient's best interest. If this case, the patient can be anaesthetised and stomach pumped. Activated charcoal can be given to prevent further absorption of Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) into the body from the intestine. Medications can given to control the seizures. Fluid therapy and body temperature monitoring will be needed through the recovery period. At home, the yard should be hosed down with water to dissolve remaining Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) and the dog should be restricted from the treated area for a two-week period.

Prognosis

The prognosis depends on the volume of Metaldehyde or Carbamate (Methiocarb) that the animal ate and on the length of time between eating the poison and starting treatment. Take your pet to your veterinarian immediately if you suspect that it ate snail or slug pellets/flakes. Death can occur in 4-12 hours if the animal is not successfully treated. In those that survive initially, liver disease can sometimes develop 2-3 days later.. Chance of recovery depends on how much poison was ingested, how quickly therapy was initiated, and the general health of the patient. While this is a serious type of poisoning, most patients have a good chance at recovery if treated properly.

Source:

<http://www.gladesvillevet.com.au/pages/newsletters/newsletter/article.php?idArticle=19053>



Is Your Dog Smarter if he has a Bigger Brain?

By: *Sophia Yin, DVM, MS*

A study found dogs have bigger brains relative to their body compared to cats. But does that mean that dogs are actually smarter? Or that cats are dumb?



The study published by researchers at Oxford University charted the evolution of mammalian brains over the last 60 million years. The scientists found that mammals such as whales, dolphins, dogs and humans, tend to have larger brains

relative to their body size when compared to more solitary species such as tigers and rhinos.

The co-authors, Dr. Susanne Shultz and Dr. Robin Dunbar, state that these findings suggest that the cooperation and coordination needed for group living can be challenging and, over time, some mammals have evolved larger brains to be able to cope with the demands of socialising. Dr Susanne Shultz, who led the research, points out, "Dogs have always been regarded as the more social animals while cats like to get on with their own thing alone."

To many readers this might suggest that dogs must be smart and cats must be dumb. But let's think about this more carefully. First, this study didn't actually measure intelligence in animals, just brain size. And brain size isn't necessarily a good indication of intellect. For instance, parrots have tiny brains compared to cats and dogs, yet most animal behaviourists would agree that the average Macaw or Cockatoo is much smarter than the average dog.

Secondly, the suggestion that dogs are smarter fails to ask, smarter at what? It's true that dogs are very social and have a rich repertoire of social tools and body language built into their brain for handling conflict as well as for forming

friendships and alliances with others. But does social aptitude equal smarter for the job? A look at the world's physicists and engineers clearly says "Not!" A psychologist friend of mine, whose task it was to measure the mental and emotional IQ of highly skilled computer tech firm employees, once told me something to the effect of, "When we measured the IQ of these scientists, they were way high, but when we look at their emotional IQ, they were well below average."

I propose that this is the same for cats. Certainly, many cats are not very social, partly because they were not socialized during kittenhood, the way puppies are. And most cats do not know many tricks or behaviours on cue the way dogs do. On the other hand, if you ask any of my colleagues they could tell and show you, that cats can learn many tricks and can learn to respond well to common cues such as sit and come when called. So what does it say if that as humans we have these potentially trainable cats in our home, yet many cats lounge around the house and get their meals for free? And many have even trained their humans to serve them on demand? Sometimes at 5 o'clock in the morning?

I'd say it means that we humans, with our big brains relative to our body size, need to use our brains more because we're being outsmarted by the little-brained cat.

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