

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR DOG IS ILL

QUESTIONNAIRE

Your dog cannot explain his symptoms, so it's the responsibility of you and your veterinarian to keep him healthy. Dogs are very good at hiding their illness so it is up to you to observe your dog for abnormalities.

Common indications of a "sick pet" include: lethargy, disorientation, weakness, weight loss, seizure, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, unproductive retching, straining to urinate, bloody urine, difficulty or inability to walk, bleeding, pale mucous membranes, difficulty breathing and persistent cough. You know your pet best and can often notice subtle early warning signs that someone else may not detect. If you observe any of the mentioned symptoms or other signs that concern you, call your veterinary hospital. The safest approach would be to have your pet examined.

Once your pet is at the hospital, your veterinarian may ask additional questions to help localize or diagnose the problem. It may help to be prepared to answer some of the following questions:

- How long have you owned your dog?
- Where did you get your dog (adoption center, breeder, previous stray)?
- What other type of pets do you have?
- What is the age of your dog?
- Has your dog experienced any previous illnesses?
- Is your dog currently under treatment for an illness or disease?
- What preventative medications is your dog currently taking?
- Does your dog receive consistent flea treatment?
- Are any other pets ill?
- Has he/she been vaccinated? If so, when? Which vaccines?
- Have there been any recent pet acquisitions?
- Have there been any recent activities such as boarding, grooming, trip to the park?
- Is a majority of your pet's time spent indoors or outdoors?
- Have there been any recent changes in diet or eating habits?
- What brand of food, how much and how frequently does your dog eat?
- What type of table scraps are offered and how frequently?
- What type of treats are offered and how frequently?
- How much water does your dog typically drink per day?
- Have there been any recent changes in water consumption?
- Have you noticed any coughing or sneezing?
- Have you noticed any lumps or bumps on your dog?
- Is your dog urinating normally?
- Is your dog having normal bowel movements?
- When is the last time he/she had a bowel movement?
- Have you noticed any recent weight loss or weight gain?

After answering some general questions, more specific questions need to be answered. A brief cursory exam of your pet at home can help you determine the answers. These questions are also commonly asked when pet owners are seeking help over the phone. Be prepared to answer the following questions, depending on the problem with your pet:

REGARDING THE EYES

- Have you noticed an increase or decrease in tear production?
- Do the eyes appear cloudy or red?
- Have you noticed any discharge coming from the eyes?
- Do the eyes appear bloodshot?
- Are the pupils the same size in both eyes?
- Have you noticed your pet rubbing or pawing at the eyes?
- Is your dog squinting?
- Do the eyes appear to be sunken or excessively protruding?

REGARDING THE EARS

- Do you notice any swelling or discharge from the ears?
- Are the ears drooping when they normally stand erect?
- Are the ears red and inflamed?
- Do you notice any odor to the ears?
- Is your dog rubbing or pawing at the ears?
- Have you noticed a lot of head shaking?
- Have you noticed any pain or crying when you rub or scratch your dog's ears?

REGARDING THE NOSE

- Have you noticed any congestion, sneezing or coughing?
- Have you noticed any blood coming from the nose?
- Have you noticed any nasal discharge?

REGARDING THE MOUTH

- Have you noticed any swelling of the lips or tongue?
- Have you noticed any bleeding from the mouth?
- What color are the gums – tissue just above the teeth?
- Looking inside the mouth. Are there any foreign objects such as bones or sticks stuck on the roof of the mouth or around the teeth?
- Is your dog able to open and close the mouth normally?
- Is there any pain involved in opening or closing the mouth?
- Have you noticed any excessive drooling or foaming at the mouth?
- Is your dog able swallow food normally?

REGARDING THE CHEST

- Is your pet experiencing any difficulty breathing?
- Have you noticed excessive panting?
- Is there any pain when the chest area is petted?
- Have you noticed any recent coughing?
- Is the heartbeat steady and consistent?
- What is the heart rate? Place your hand or your ear on the left side of your dog's chest, just behind the elbow. You should be able to feel or hear the heartbeat. Count how many beats the heart pumps in one minute.

REGARDING THE ABDOMEN/STOMACH AREA

- Has your dog been having any diarrhea or vomiting?
- Is your dog able to eat and drink normally?
- Does the abdomen/stomach area appear swollen or distended?
- Does your dog appear to be in pain when the stomach area is petted?
- Is your dog known to chew on non-food items such as clothing, towels, rocks, or other items?

REGARDING THE URINARY AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS

- Have you noticed any difference in urinating?
- Does your pet seem to strain to urinate or cry in pain?
- Does your dog repeatedly try to urinate with no urine produced?
- Is there any blood in the urine?
- How frequently does your dog urinate?
- Is your female dog spayed?
- Has your female ever had puppies? If so, at what age?
- If your female is not spayed, when was her last heat cycle and was she bred?
- Do you notice any discharge from the vaginal area?

- Is your male dog neutered?
- If so, at what age?
- Do you notice any discharge from the penis?
- If your dog is not neutered, do you notice any swelling of the testicles?
- Have you noticed your dog excessively licking or grooming the genital area?

REGARDING THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM – BONES AND JOINTS

- Have you noticed any limping?
- Are any legs or joints swollen?
- Has your dog been excessively licking at one area of his/her legs?
- Does your pet show signs of pain when walking?
- Is your dog able to walk normally?
- Does your dog walk on his/her knuckles?
- Does your dog drag any legs when walking?
- Does your pet seem to be in pain when petting him or her?

By supplying the answers these questions, your veterinarian will be in a much better position to help your pet. Additional tests may be necessary to find out what the problem is but the answers to the above questions can greatly narrow the area of concern.