

# Pets may not be ill, stress could be the issue

By Paul McCutcheon

You might not realize it, but if Fluffy or Skippy are listless, disobedient and getting sick all the time, chances are your pet doesn't have some mysterious disease -- he or she may simply be stressed out.

A lot of people think that stress is something that only affects humans, but it's a very real threat to the health and happiness of their pets, too. Better pet care will result when pet lovers and veterinarians understand that stress is the underlying cause of every form of health problem a dog or cat can have.

Stress, combined with diet and other environmental concerns, can present serious -- but unspecific -- symptoms that can worry both the pet and the pet owner.

It is important to distinguish between acute stress, immediate and intense, versus chronic stress, a real drag on wellness that results from a long-standing cause of stress. The best way to support your pet's present and future wellness is through stress prevention. Tune into the kinds of stress that affect your pet and stress-proof the ways you look after their daily needs. For instance, boredom and loneliness are probably the most damaging stress factors in a pet's life.

Tips for pet owners who want healthier, happier pets include:

- \* Think Before You Adopt -- It's critical to ask yourself serious questions about your lifestyle and future before you adopt a pet. In that sense, you can better choose an animal whose needs are similar to your own. By being honest with yourself about your personal circumstance, you can ensure that

your pet won't face a stressful future and inevitable health problems.

\* Establish Your Role – You need to see your role and your veterinarian's role in a different way. While you are in the best position to influence your dog or cat, your veterinarian can be a good coach who provides you opinions and advice that help you make better choices regarding the care and feeding of your pet.

\* Watch Their Diet – Just as processed foods are being blamed for an increase in obesity for people, causing a wide variety of health problems, processed food is a danger for pets, as well. Look into switching over to a new trend in pet food, raw foods. They can be found in pet specialty shops and grocery stores in the refrigerated section. They are also known as "fresh" foods for pets, so ask your store managers about them. They provide a balanced diet with none of the dangers associated with processed food, which makes up the majority of the pet foods available at pet stores and supermarkets today.

There is a new holistic way of caring for your pet that incorporates a combination of different approaches to health care – traditional, indigenous, energy-based, and recent developments in Western science all contribute to this new method. There is a direct relationship between the emotional health of a pet and that pet's physical health, just as there is in humans. When we're stressed out from work or family issues, our immune systems suffer. We lose sleep, and we are far more susceptible to the bug that's always going around. We're mammals, and so are dogs and cats.

What makes us think they are any different? The truth is, when we're stressed out, so are our pets. Just as pets can sense anger, fear or illness in us – which explains why pets try to comfort us when we're sick – they can also sense our stress.

By addressing the stress in our own lives, we can help keep

our pets stress-free and prevent many of the common illnesses that plague them, making them happy and healthy companions for a long time to come.”

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