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A WEE problem for cats

Cats can get a number of conditions which affect the bladder and urethra (from the bladder to the outside world), but these often present with the same set of signs.

Most commonly these cats will present with:

- Frequent attempts to urinate, sometimes passing a small volume, sometimes nothing
- Blood in the urine
- Straining to urinate (sometimes looks like constipation)
- Urinating in inappropriate places (on the carpet, clothes, etc)
- Just off colour and appear painful in the abdomen.

There are a number of different diseases that may cause these signs:

- Bacterial infections of the bladder wall.
- Crystals in the bladder. (these are often diet related and in some cases we will have to operate to remove large numbers of stones from the bladder)
- Blockage of the urethra (can be caused by crystals or mucous build up)
- Tumours of the bladder (rare and often hard to diagnose)
- No known cause (these are called feline idiopathic lower urinary tract disease)

The age, sex, diet and home environment of the cat can give some clues as to the potential cause. With blockages far more common in neutered males than females, tumours more common in older animals and crystals more common with certain dry diets. These patients often present after a period of stress, we had several cases following the earthquakes last year and following cold wet periods we will see an increased number.

A thorough clinical exam and a urine sample will help to identify the issue and is the starting point to treatment. Blocked bladders are very obvious on clinical exam. These are emergencies and rely on anaesthetising the cat and passing a catheter into the bladder to relieve the obstruction. A urine sample will tell us if crystals are present and can give an indication of infection.

Pet Insurance

Pet Insurance has been around for over 50 years in the UK and currently it is estimated that 26% of pets (cats and dogs) there are currently insured. There are about 600 policies on the market in the UK. In comparison, rates of Pet Insurance in New Zealand are estimated at less than 10% and in some regions are probably closer to only 1%. There are three companies offering insurance with a combined total of 18 different policies. This is all despite New Zealand having one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world.

The most commonly claimed for cases are: lameness, skin/ears, growths/cancers, gastro-intestinal issues (including blockages) and fighting injuries (mainly cats). Some of these cases can be relatively straight forward, but it is not uncommon for costs to escalate as more diagnostics, surgery or drugs are required. Obviously the larger the patient the higher the costs as they require proportionately bigger doses of drugs.

Pet insurance policies are not all created equally. There are vast differences in what each policy offers and subsequently what these policies cost. The most extensive plans on the market currently will cover up to \$18000 per year for a dog and \$12000 for a cat. As well as surgical and medical issues some of these policies will also cover advertising for lost and stolen pets, care if the owner is hospitalised and even to the extent of refunding a cancelled family holiday due to a pets health issues.

Below are some procedures and an indication of some minimum costs:

- Bone/toy/material stuck in the stomach or intestines and surgery to remove would start from \$800 and can quickly go up depending on level of damage and region it is stuck.
- Cruciate surgery (the most common orthopaedic surgery performed) from \$1200 to \$4500 depending on size of patient and procedure performed.
- Broken leg depending on the type of fracture usually from \$1000 upwards
- Pyometra (infected uterus, may not be covered by insurance) often \$800-\$1200
- Diabetes for a 20kg dog about \$2000 - 3000 per year.
- 10kg dog in heart failure with full treatment also \$2000-3000 per year.

The biggest thing with pet insurance policies is to read the fine print. All policies will have things that they will not cover and requirements to keep the insurance valid. In most cases, pre-existing conditions will not be covered and some will exclude certain things for the first month or two of a policy being taken out.

Some policies will pay for vaccinations but most require vaccinations to be up to date for the policy to be valid. Certain breeds that have high rates of genetic disorders will attract higher premiums or may have these cases declined. Also breeding related issues are not usually covered (i.e. caesareans, infected uterus).



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Young Fractures

The most common cause of hind limb lameness seen in dogs are injuries of the stifle (knee) joint, with the most common cause injury being rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament. There are two ways that these injuries can occur: either by slow chronic degeneration of the ligament with age or conformation, which then finally snaps because the ligament has become so thin, or acute tears in athletic dogs. These acute tears often occur when the dogs leg stops suddenly and the dog keeps going - i.e. standing in a rabbit hole while running or from jumping when excessive force is used at take off. They are also one of the most common orthopaedic injuries of sports people.



There are two cruciate ligaments, the cranial and the caudal, with the cranial ligament having two branches. The two ligaments form an 'X' within the knee joint to prevent the femur and tibia sliding abnormally forwards and backwards relative to each other. The lameness that is seen in the early stages is usually a reflection of the increased laxity within the knee joint.



As the disease progresses (in chronic cases) or is left in acute cases, fluid will build up in the joint from the abnormal movement and arthritis will start to form on the joint surfaces as well. Both of these additional abnormalities will increase the degree of lameness. We most commonly see these injuries in young, active, large breed dogs.

Diagnosis is partially based on feeling the range of motion that is present in the knee. The two most common tests with palpation are the cranial draw and the tibial thrust. Often larger dogs that are well muscled will be able to tense their muscles making these tests unreliable in the conscious patient. For this reason sedation or a full anaesthetic is often performed, which will also allow x-rays to be taken to assess the degree of arthritic change already present.

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Duration: 45 mins to 1 hr.
Cost: \$70.00
Class size: Limited – please phone to put your name on the list.

For More Information: Call Karyn or Ketta at the Clinic – (03) 578 6965.

Have A Look At Our Website
www.vetsonalabama.co.nz



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