

For the Health of Your Pet...

How to Tell if Your Cat or Dog May Need Veterinary Care

This information sheet lists the more common signs of health and illness in dogs and cats. Dogs and especially cats can "hide" illnesses and other ailments, so try not to let them fool you!

EYES

Good Signs

- clean
- clear and bright
- responsive to visual stimuli

Warning Signs

- watery
- red
- filmy
- cloudy
- discolored
- dry
- inflamed (swollen)
- hypersensitive to light
- pupils are unequal in size
- pupils are overly dilated or
- overly constricted
- showing third (or middle) eyelid
- showing discharge
- itchy (animal rubs at eyes)
- painful (animal squints)

BREATHING/ RESPIRATION

Good Signs

- respiration is regular
- respiration sounds clear
- respiration rate is normal

Warning Signs

- breathing is irregular, rapid, shallow or labored
- animal is sneezing, coughing, wheezing
- moist lung sounds
- breathing is through open mouth

EARS

Good Signs

- clean (both outer and ear and canal)
- pink and clean (inner ear)
- responsive to noise

Warning Signs

- showing discharge (waxy or other)
- crusty
- red or inflamed
- hair around ear is matted
- scabbed
- fly-bitten
- itchy (animal shakes head/scratches ear)
- foul odor
- painful (animal cries when ear is touched)

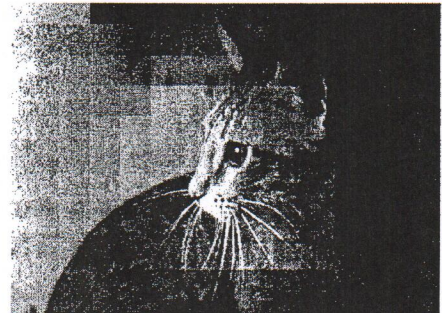
NOSE

Good Signs

- clean
- free of discharge

Warning Signs

- scabbed
- showing discharge
- crusty
- cracked
- congested or blocked



**For more information
or veterinary clinic care,
call or visit our shelter.**

APA of Missouri
1705 S. Hanley Road
St. Louis, MO 63144
314-645-4610
www.apamo.org

MOUTH

Good Signs

- free of odor
- teeth are clean
- gums are pink
- animal appears to swallow normally

Warning Signs

- unusually red or pale
- dry
- salivating (animal is drooling)
- foul odor not caused by food
- foreign bodies
- showing discharge
- swollen or inflamed
- gums are pale, white, purple, or inflamed
- teeth are loose, pitted, broken, or tartar-covered
- animal has trouble swallowing

SKIN/HAIR

Good Signs

- coat is bright and glossy
- coat appears well-groomed
- skin is clean, free of oil
- skin is free of swelling, lumps, and lesions

Warning Signs

- coat is dull
- coat is oily, dirty
- coat shows areas of hair loss or thinning
- hair is matted
- skin is dry or flaky
- skin shows swelling, lumps, or lesions
- skin is scabbed
- skin is red, irritated
- animal has fleas, ticks, lice, or other parasites

LEGS/FEET

Good Signs

- legs support weight evenly (no limp)
- pads are clean and smooth
- nails are healthy looking

Warning Signs

- animal favors one leg
- animal has limited motion
- animal is weak or uncoordinated
- joint feels tender
- pads are cracked or hard
- pads have matted hair between them
- nails are long, short, or ingrown
- legs show swelling, lumps or lesions

ANAL/GENITAL

Good Signs

- area is clean and free of discharge
- stool is normal

Warning Signs

- area has discharge
- stool is watery and bloody
- animal is constipated
- area around anus shows swelling or lumps
- one or both testicles are not descended (not in scrotum)
- one testicle is harder and/or larger than other



GENERAL

APPEARANCE

Good Signs

- animal is bright, alert, and responsive
- skin is elastic
- animal is balanced, coordinated
- temperature is normal
- animal is interested in surroundings, oriented

Warning Signs

- animal is very thin or obese
- animal has wounds or abscesses
- animal has swelling, lumps, or bumps
- mammary glands are swollen or oozing discharge
- skin does not spring back (animal is dehydrated)
- animal appears uncoordinated
- animal tilts head
- animal repeatedly circles
- abdomen is bloated
- animal appears lethargic
- animal appears hyperactive
- animal appears disoriented

NORMAL RANGES FOR TEMPERATURE, HEART RATE, AND RESPIRATORY RATE FOR HEALTHY CATS AND DOGS

Temperature (rectal)
100-102.5 Fahrenheit

Heart rate (at rest)
Large dogs
80-100 beats/minute

Medium dogs
100-120 beats/minute

Small dogs and cats
120-180 beats/minute

Respiratory rate (at rest)
16-26 breaths/minute