

Constipation in Cats

Overview

Constipation is infrequent, incomplete, or difficult defecation with passage of hard or dry feces. Constipation is sometimes used interchangeably with obstipation, which is intractable constipation where defecation becomes impossible. It may cause great distress and pain.

Constipation can occur in association with any disorder that impairs the passage of fecal material through the colon, slowing its transit time. This delay in transit allows the removal of additional salt and water from the feces, producing harder and drier stools.

Systemic signs of constipation vary. Feces can be retained for days before any deleterious effects are observed. Some animals may display mild signs, such as a slightly prolonged posture while defecating, and then produce a dry, firm stool. Others will have frequent or painful attempts to defecate with little or no fecal passage.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Constipation is generally diagnosed by a thorough history, physical examination and abdominal x-rays. Bloodwork and abdominal ultrasound may be recommended.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Cats with constipation are treated with enemas, fluids, stool softeners, and an increase in fiber in the diet. In a small number of cases, surgical removal of part of the colon may be necessary. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Straining to defecate
- Dry, hard feces
- Infrequent defecation
- Vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Lethargy

** Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*