

Litter Quitter

Every few years the concept of teaching your cat to use the toilet comes around again. Things like Litter Quitter hit the social media scene. They aim to encourage your cat to perch on the toilet seat. Sounds like a great idea?

Unfortunately not so great. Firstly cats need to be in quite a particular position to go to the toilet. As they get older this can be very hard to maintain perched on a toilet seat. This increases the risk of them deciding to go somewhere else, like behind the sofa.

Secondly cats are a desert animal. As such water is a very rare resource that needs protecting. Cats don't like eating near water let alone going to the toilet near it. That means getting them to use the toilet can cause a lot of anxiety (and yes that does mean if you have a combined food and water bowl you should give it to the dog and get 2 new bowls for the cat and separate them).

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"If you don't want your dog to have bad breath, do what I do: Pour a little Lavoris in the toilet"

Jay Leno



The hottest place on earth is the Lut Desert in Iran. NASA have recorded a surface temperature of 70 deg Celsius. It is so hot no plants can grow. The start of the food chain is migratory birds flying off track and falling out of the sky.

So, people might draw the line at temperatures of 70 degrees. Not Ruppell's fox who lives, you guessed it, in the Lut Desert. They cope by being crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk), where they hunt lizard's, insects, and other prey, who also manage to survive out there.

Coping with the HEAT!

The Ruppell's fox lives in the hottest place on the earth's surface. No mean feat. So how do they do it?

Firstly they are crepuscular (like kangaroos), so are least active when it is hottest.

Secondly they have really big ears (these puppies make Prince Charles look like an amateur). Their ears are bigger than the rest of their head, allowing for very rapid heat loss.

The Ruppell's fox also has highly effective kidneys. They can retain water very effectively and rarely need to drink, usually gaining enough moisture from the insects and other prey they consume.

They can also slow their metabolic rate to conserve energy and thus produce less body heat.

During the heat of the day they hide in rock crevices and rest.

Have you ever wondered why the camel has a hump? Yes it's full of fat we know. They put all that stored energy in one place, instead of in the traditional human 'spare tyre'. Fat is a great insulator so if you wrap yourself in it you conserve body heat (a trick used by seals, whales and the like. So the camel packages it up so that they can stay cool more easily.

However one animal who laughs in the face of Mr Ruppell. The Pompeii worm. This little chap lives deep in the ocean, along hydrothermal vents below the Galapagos Islands. Temperatures reach 80 degrees down there. And in a bizarre example of nature's ingenuity they feed on bacteria that grow on mucous they exude from their own skin. Maybe not a great lifestyle choice, but handy!



SCRATCHING driving you mad?

Ways to help your Itchy pet this Summer

So if your dog looks like this you maybe need to see us!

Spring is the time when we see lots of pets starting to scratch each year. Spring brings out biting insects like fleas to which lots of dogs are allergic. However it is also the time when lots of plants start flowering. These include grasses and trees like the wattles, all of which are common allergens in pets. If it causes hay fever in humans it is likely to cause skin allergies in pets.

Recently an exciting new treatment option has become available that can be life changing for many dogs.

Who's JAK?

JAK is an acronym for Janus Kinase, and the drugs we now use are JAK inhibitors. Janus Kinase is a specific inflammatory protein that act's in the skin to cause itching (actually there are quite a few different types but the one we are interested in is the itching one).

Traditionally we often needed steroids to stop dogs scratching and whilst they work very well in many cases they can cause side effects. JAK inhibitors are much more specific and hence cause far fewer side effects. If needed animals can be on JAK inhibitors for long periods with little risk of side effects.

Are antihistamines useful for dogs?

Not very is the simple answer. In humans histamine makes us itch. In dogs histamine isn't itchy, but causes inflammation. Only then is it itchy.

The difference is significant as humans can avoid the inflammation by taking an antihistamine when they feel itchy.

In dogs the inflammation has already occurred by the time we see the signs so they will tend to still itch after an antihistamine.

We use them sometimes as a preventative but not as a treatment



Control strategies for itchy Dogs

- As mentioned JAK inhibitors can treat itching dogs very effectively but there are lots of other things you can do at home.
- If you have never tried it, think about a dietary trial. Only about 7% of allergic dogs have a primary dietary allergy, but if your pet does you may be able to control all the disease with a new pet food.
- About 40% of allergic dogs are allergic to flea bites so good quality parasite control is really important. Even dogs who aren't allergic to fleas can get worse if they have fleas due to the physical irritation.
- Many dogs are allergic to house dust and dust mites. We can test your dog to see if they are one of them. If they are, many of the dust control strategies used for people with dust allergies can be useful. These include dust proof bedding and special washing products.
- Medicated shampoos can treat many of the secondary problems associated with allergies, like infections and a very oily (or dry) coat.
- Airborne allergies are the most common cause of skin disease. That's why skin disease peaks in spring. If you can identify the culprit you may be able to remove it from your garden.
- Essential fatty acids have a mild to moderate anti-inflammatory effect. Also a few dogs are fatty acid deficient and can be cured with supplementation (such animals are rare however). There are now a number of diets specifically to provide support for animals with skin disease and can significantly decrease clinical signs in affected animals.

If you would like more information on any of these options please contact us.