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## Vomiting cats

Cats vomit quite often as part of their normal digestive process. In fact if you try eating some whole raw mice, you may find you vomit up bits as well! However excessive or overly frequent vomiting may indicate an underlying problem.

Some of the common reasons, like hairballs, are very easy to treat with hairball control cat foods. An uncommon but very significant cause of vomiting is allergies, in particular to food but less commonly to snake bites. It is rarely witnessed but if you see your cat playing with a snake, then vomit a few minutes later you can be very confident they were bitten.

Parasites are another uncommon cause of vomiting in urban cats.

Kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, high blood pressure, and diabetes can all indirectly affected the stomach and cause vomiting.

The stomach can also be affected by food allergies and dietary intolerance, and infiltrative diseases such as lymphoma and other forms of cancer.

If you notice your cat vomiting more often than normal, or if you notice a new pattern of vomiting please contact us as it should be investigated.

Also cats that vomit two or three times a week warrant investigation even if they have been doing it for a long time.



# Bearded Dragons

Bearded dragons are the most popular species of reptile kept in captivity in Australia. They have a curious and friendly personality.

There are 8 different species of “beardies” and the most commonly kept variety is the Inland or Central Australia species. Bearded dragons are so called for their scales and loose skin under their throat, which often may turn darker when they are excited or during territorial displays and look like a beard. Bearded dragons are a desert species and can live for 7-10 years in captivity.

Bearded dragons are cold blooded like all reptiles, so their enclosure is critical to keep them healthy. Unlike mammals, which regulate their body temperature internally, bearded dragons rely upon environmental temperatures to provide them with warmth. In the wild, bearded dragons will bask upon sun warmed rocks when it is cold, and burrow underground to keep cool in the heat of the day. The preferred body temperature of bearded dragons is 35-39degC and in captivity, stress arises when they are kept in an enclosure with a narrow temperature range that does not meet their requirements. This means they are unable to regulate their temperature by moving to a warmer or cooler area and can lead to a number of health problems. Never assume that the temperature set on the thermostat

is really what the lizard is experiencing in the enclosure. Thermostats break and malfunction, so it is important to regularly check the temperature in the enclosure with a thermometer. Brumation occurs in wild beardies in the southern parts of Australia when winter temperatures drop below 10-12 degrees for more than 2-3 days. Brumation is a state of torpor not dissimilar to hibernation. They become sluggish and have a reduced or even absent appetite for 2-3 months. As the ambient temperatures rise consistently above 12 degrees then they become more alert. Many lizards in captivity do not go into brumation as they are in an environment of artificial temperatures where the thermostat may not be set lower over winter.

Juvenile beardies are primarily insectivorous and prefer to eat crickets and meal-worms. However as they get older, they become more omnivorous and need a more varied diet. A lot of health problems such as metabolic bone disease (similar to osteoporosis) and periodontal disease (gum recession) are caused by inappropriate diet, or a lack of exposure to UV light. Adult beardies need greens, leaves, berries, fruits and flowers in their diet and actually do best on a 60-90% herbivorous diet. UV exposure is best achieved by exposure to natural sunlight, but may be achieved through special UV lights bought from specialist reptile shops. UV lights need changing every 6-8 months as although they still produce visible light the UV light (which is not visible to the naked eye) is no longer produced. A natural day-night rhythm should be maintained with the lights on for 12-14 hours a day in summer, and 10-12 hours in winter.



## Toilet Training Puppies

Every day I talk to people about new puppies and kittens, and every time I get a new puppy myself I am surprised at how much work it is. So much for our ability to learn!

With a new puppy lots of things happen all at once.

Toilet training is one of the most pressing issues in most people's mind. Remember though most puppies can't hold on overnight until they are 12-16 weeks old.

If you don't already have your puppy, plan ahead. Pick an area of the yard you would like them to use as a toilet area. When you first arrive home with the puppy go straight to that area. In a new 'den' puppies look for a toilet area very early on so starting off on the right foot can really accelerate the process.

The most important thing to remember is praise the good and ignore the bad. If they make a mess inside ignore it.

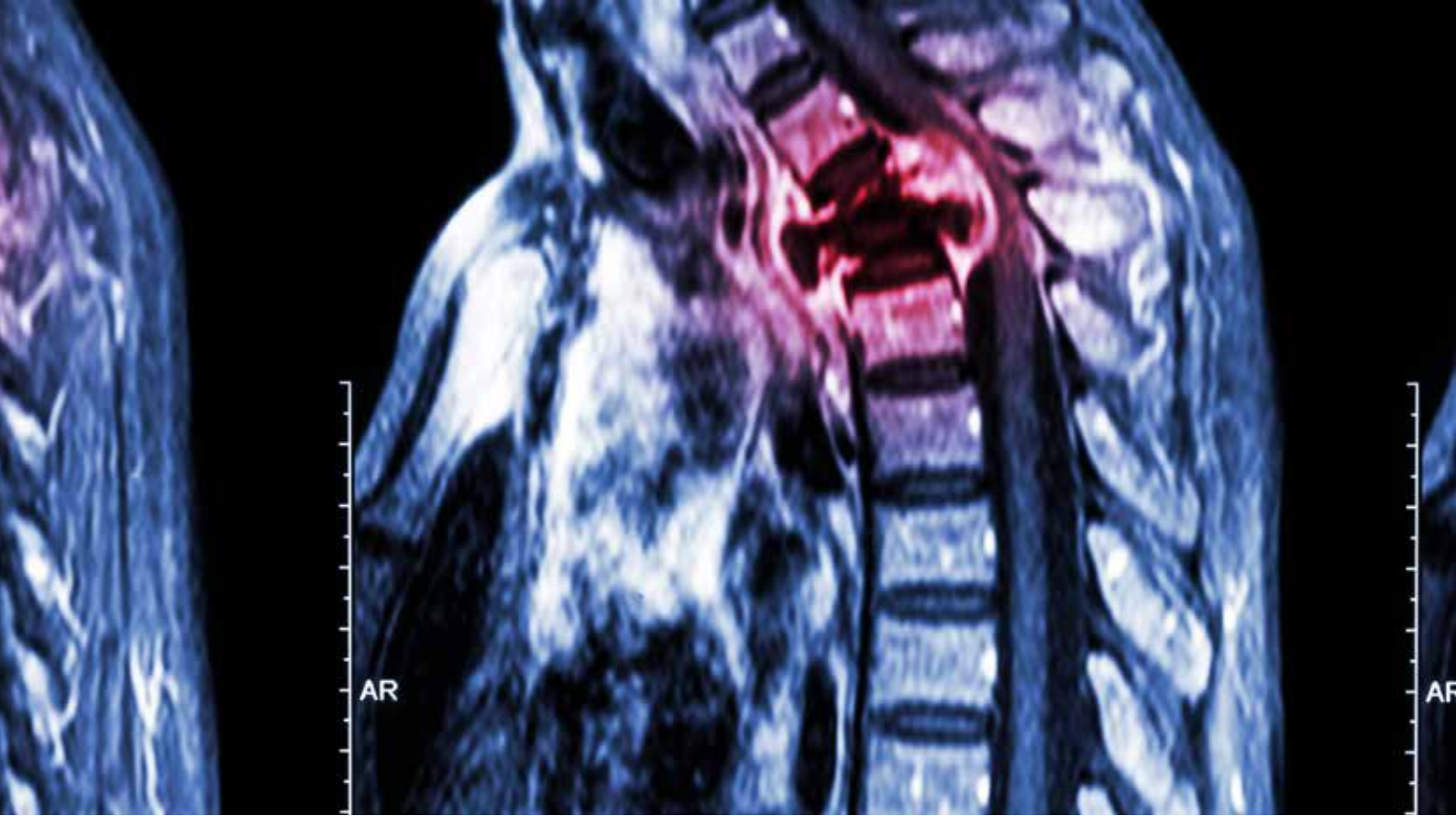
Try to preempt when they may want to go (after sleeping, eating, drinking or playing), and take them outside before they make a mess. When they do go in the correct spot give lots of praise and rewards.

Reward has much more effect than punishment, and is much less likely to cause unpredicted outcomes (if you shout at a puppy for weeing on the rug, it may go behind the couch where you can't see him!)

It is worth remembering that if your puppy is urinating very frequently or seems incapable of being toilet trained it may have a medical problem such as a bladder infection or ectopic ureters (where the kidneys bypass the bladder so the puppy has no control). Whilst these events are uncommon: if you are concerned give us a call.

- Praise appropriate behaviour
- Ignore mistakes
- Preempt when your puppy may want to toilet.
- Try to pick one toilet area and stick to it
- The less times your puppy makes a mistake the quicker they will learn

If you are toilet training a rabbit, look for the area they choose to toilet in (they are generally very consistent), and place the litter tray in that spot. After a few weeks you should be able to move the tray if you wish.



## How do cancers form?

Cancer is the name given to a collection of related diseases. In all types of cancer, some of the body's cells begin to divide without stopping and spread into surrounding tissues.

They all have some common features. Due to genetic anomalies, cancer cells grow without normal regulation (grow when they are not needed) and have altered functionality (can't do their normal job, or do it too much).

Malignant cancers spread more aggressively, and often to remote sites through blood or the lymphatic system. Benign tumours do not spread into, or invade, nearby tissues. Benign tumours can sometimes be quite large, however. When removed, they usually don't grow back, whereas malignant tumours sometimes do.

Most cells have a programmed life to death cycle. This programmed cell death is called apoptosis. Cancer cells are very good at ignoring this, so keep growing.

Cancers cannot grow their own blood supply so they absorb normal inflammatory proteins from the local environment. The body then grows blood vessels towards these proteins and in the process forms a blood supply for the tumour. That's one reason why some tumours grow more slowly in the presence of some anti-inflammatories.

Perhaps most surprising some cancers thrive in the immune system, the very system designed to eliminate them. That's why cancer is often located in lymph nodes.

The genetic changes that cause cancer may be inherited, or can occur later in life.

Carcinogens damage DNA and predispose to cancer. However, some times normal cell division can cause an error, and lead to cancer. That is why cancer can sometimes strike quite randomly, and has been described as the disease without morals, as it can affect people who live an otherwise very healthy life style.

But its not all doom and gloom, many cancers are now curable, many more are treatable and the prospect of a cure for cancer is very real. If we can find out why the body can't recognize cancers, and allow it to see them, then the cancer will be eliminated.

Finally it is worth remembering the most cancer occurs is old pets: (in people 70% of cancer deaths occur in people over 65 years of age).