

Caring for Cats with Digestive Sensitivities

Vet Christies Beach knows that cats are famously picky about their food, but sometimes finicky eating is a symptom of something more serious. One not so subtle clue many be found in or near the litter box. If what a cat leaves there looks a little less than normal, it could be due to a sensitive stomach, also called dietary intolerance. If the signs are there, a few simple moves by the owner may restore the cat's health, comfort and cleanliness.

Check for underlying health issues

Diarrhea, vomiting or constipation in cats should be a signal for a trip to the veterinarian. While dietary intolerance can cause these symptoms, they can also be indications of metabolic problems with the kidneys or thyroid, bacterial or parasitic infections or inflammations. A thorough examination is necessary to rule out these possibilities.

Another thing to check is the condition of the cat's mouth. The discomfort associated with tooth and gum disease can have an effect on overall health, including digestion. Bacteria from infections of the mouth and teeth can also enter the bloodstream and attack other organs like the heart, the lungs or the kidneys. A cat's teeth should be regularly brushed and veterinarians should provide thorough dental care.

Read the labels on cat food

Once the problem has been diagnosed as dietary intolerance, the veterinarian may suggest a diet that excludes some ingredients and excludes others, meaning owners must read the labels carefully. Low-residue cat foods, special blends of protein, fiber and other healthy ingredients, are low in the antigens that can cause an allergic reaction. The ration should also have a fiber source that is only moderately fermentable, since these ingredients produce less gas than others. Dried beet pulp is one ingredient that can be beneficial for constipation in cats. Something else to look for is a prebiotic, a fiber intended to be digested not by the cat itself but by the internal bacteria in the intestine. This support for the good bacteria in the cat's gut can result in markedly better digestion.

Keep the diet consistent

For cats with sensitive stomachs, variety is not a good thing. Find one good ration that the cat enjoys and stick to it. Fatty treats can also cause intestinal distress, and are not appropriate for cats with digestive problems. A healthy, consistent diet is a vital part of caring for cats afflicted with sensitive stomachs.

A cat with digestive trouble is not a comfortable cat, and owners faced with litter box messes, or worse, misses, is likely to be discontented, too. While a veterinarian should be consulted to positively diagnose the root cause, the treatment for a dietary intolerance is likely to be as simple as choosing a different cat food. Once the symptoms clear up, the cat can live a happy, normal life.