

# Emergency Quarterly

## Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston

### *Respiratory Distress*

*By Krista Ross, CVT*

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Breathing is essential to life. This is why it is very important to bring your pet to a licensed veterinarian for any change in normal breathing your pet may display. Trouble breathing can manifest itself in many ways, and there are many causes for respiratory distress. A licensed veterinarian is the only person who can find out why your pet is acting abnormally and give you options for treatment. Respiratory distress is a potentially life-threatening condition that is best treated early.

If your pet is having trouble breathing, he or she may have one of the following signs: coughing, gulping, gasping, breathing fast or shallow, loud breathing, exercise intolerance (inability or unwillingness to play or go for walks), open-mouth breathing, restlessness, and the inability to lie down all the way. Many times, your pet's gums (also called 'mucous membranes') will be pale pink, white, cyanotic (blue), or "muddy" (greyish-pinkish-brownish). This indicates your pet's inability to get vital oxygen to the body. In severe cases of respiratory distress, your pet will have a specific posture in which he or she will be sitting or lying down holding his or her chest off the ground and leaning

forward with his or her neck extended.

Your veterinarian has many ways to find out what is causing the respiratory distress and will give you recommendations based on a physical exam. Your vet will thoroughly listen to your pet's heart and lungs during the exam because both heart problems and lung problems are frequently the cause of respiratory distress. Your vet may recommend x-rays to check on the inner workings of the neck and chest. This will help determine if the problem comes from the trachea (windpipe), lungs or heart. Your vet may also recommend that your pet be placed on supplemental oxygen through a tube so that it is easier for the lungs to load up the blood with the oxygen. If your pet has air or fluid around the lungs, your vet will recommend a thoracocentesis, which is when the vet places a needle into the chest to draw out the air or fluid. Some causes of respiratory distress that include the airways and heart are: foreign body inhalation, allergies, collapsing trachea, laryngeal paralysis, pneumonia, heart disease (dilated cardiomyopathy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, congestive heart failure),

AAHA has a very nice website with lots of helpful information regarding your pet. There is a kid section, Games, Pet Related Events, and much more. Click on the image below to check it out for yourself.



*Although we hope your pets will never need our services, we are ready to deliver the care he or she deserves, should you need it.*



heartworms, kennel cough, canine influenza, feline upper respiratory disease, feline infectious peritonitis, collapsed lung(s), pulmonary contusions (bruises caused by trauma), and cancer.

Blood work can be performed as well to see if your pet has a metabolic disorder that is causing the respiratory distress. Diseases such as diabetes, hyperthyroid and Cushing's disease can cause changes in the levels of certain hormones, enzymes and waste products in the blood that cause your pet to have altered breathing patterns.

As you can see, there are many reasons a pet may be having respiratory distress. It is vital that if you notice your pet having trouble breathing that your pet be seen as soon as possible so that a licensed veterinarian can determine the cause and course of treatment. During regular business hours, call your regular vet's clinic and bring your pet in right away. If it is after hours, please call the closest emergency clinic.

**Common types of toxic ingestions seen at the Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston, and what happens if ingested.**

#### **Chocolate**

It's not the caffeine, it's the theobromine, which leads to vasoconstriction (constriction of the blood vessels), tachycardia (excessively rapid heartbeat), and CNS (Central Nervous System) stimulation.

#### **Sago Palm**

Sago Palm plants contain a by-product called cycasin which causes serious liver and intestinal disease and is often fatal if not treated.

#### **Ibuprofen (Advil)**

If ingested, Ibuprofen can cause liver and kidney failure and gastric ulceration.

#### **Antifreeze**

It is sweet tasting, but can cause kidney failure. Time is critical. Get your pet to a Veterinarian immediately.

If your vehicle leaks any antifreeze, be sure to clean it up quickly so as not to allow any pet to become poisoned.

#### **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)**

Tylenol, or Acetaminophen destroys red blood cells and can lead to liver failure.

You can see articles on some of these topics at our website at [www.aercwh.com](http://www.aercwh.com).

## **CPR Class (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation)**

Knowing the proper way to perform CPR on your pet could mean the difference between life and death.

Several pets each year die before arriving at an emergency veterinary clinic. Performing CPR on your pet could add valuable minutes which would allow you time to get to an emergency facility where your pet can get the professional care he/she needs.

The Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston is proud to announce that we will be at the [Houston Pet Expo](#) on April 14, 2012 to teach CPR and other first aid techniques for those interested.

All proceeds will go to benefit [Friends of Moose](#). We hope to see you there.



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## Vestibular Disease

*By Jonathan Davis*

Vestibular disease produces varying degrees of loss of equilibrium causing imbalance and ataxia, or lack of muscle coordination. Also referred to as old dog vestibular disease, or idiopathic vestibular syndrome it can be presented with many different signs. When a pet is brought to the clinic and is showing signs of being disoriented it is a good idea to assess the pet right away to determine if immediate treatment is necessary. In some cases vestibular disease can be mistaken for a seizure or stroke.

While vital signs are being gathered on the disoriented patient, the technician will want to make note of any other abnormal signs such as, head tilting to one side, rapid eye movement (Nystagmus), and problems walking or standing. Noting these abnormal signs may help to differentiate Vestibular disease from other diseases or conditions that may affect the CNS.

An accurate history will also help greatly in the diagnosing of the potential Vestibular diseased patient. A full patient history with the length of time the patient has been disoriented, as well as any possible toxin exposure will help to rule out more serious conditions. Due to the location and symptoms of the Vestibular disease the doctor may perform a neurologic exam, along with a thorough ear exam.

After the doctor has done a thorough examination of the patient, diagnostic testing will further help the process of finding a proper treatment

plan for the disoriented pet. Diagnostics that may be beneficial are; blood work to rule out toxin exposure or underlying health issues the patient may be facing. Ear cytology will aid in diagnosing any ear infections, which may be the cause of disorientation or head tilt. In some cases radiographs may be needed to rule out the presence of tumors or trauma to the inner and middle ear.

Patients showing signs of Vestibular disease should be kept calm and as still as possible.

It helps to place some extra blankets or towels in with the patient, as they may be unable to keep their balance and will fall repeatedly. In more extreme cases the patient may roll or tumble to one side, therefore the extra padding will help to prevent additional trauma or injury.

When vestibular disease has been determined to be the cause of the presenting clinical signs, treatment will be determined by the diagnostic test results. If any infection is found in the ear antibiotics and anti-nausea medications may be started to help combat infection and motion sickness. In more severe cases were a patient is unable to walk and or eat due to severe disorientation and vertigo, hospitalization with intravenous antibiotics, anti-nausea injections, and iv fluid treatment may be necessary.



### Ophthalmology at the AERCWH

The Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston is proud to announce the addition of our Ophthalmology department. Beginning in November, Dr. Millichamp will be available to see patients referred by your regular veterinarian.

Please check out our website at [www.aecwh.com/Ophthalmology/html](http://www.aecwh.com/Ophthalmology/html) for additional information on this exciting addition to our facility.

Don't forget to "like" us Facebook. We would love to hear stories about your four-legged friend and how he/she is doing since your visit to the Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston.

You can also find information about the latest pet news, including recalls, happenings and fun information.

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*Visit our Website for information such as:*

- *News & Information*
- *Client Feedback Forms*
- *Care Credit Application*
- *Common Emergencies & Past Cases*
- *Pet Memorials*
- *Links to Other Helpful Websites, and*
- *Hospital Policies*



[WWW.AERCWH.COM](http://WWW.AERCWH.COM)

## **Animal Emergency & Referral Center of West Houston**

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