

PAYNEHAM VET CENTRE

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Fur Balls in Cats

Cats spend at least 25% of their day grooming

The incidence of fur balls in Domestic Short Hair is 10% and Domestic Long Hairs 20% (due to longer fur).

Incidence of regular fur ball problems means the cat is vomiting fur balls **two or more times per year**.

Causes:

1. The ingestion of excess hairs due to over grooming. This can be due to
 - Fleas
 - Pruritus i.e., allergies and Flea Allergy Dermatitis
 - Pain and anxiety
2. Chronic Gastro Intestinal Disease i.e., dietary intolerance; Inflammatory Bowel Disease.
Treatment for primary Gastro Intestinal Disease
 - Hypoallergenic Diets
 - Medications- Flagyl/Pred

Prevention

1. **Shorter Coat**- Shaving long hair to short hair
2. **Diet**- Aim to improve gastric motility and emptying
 - Small and frequent meals
 - Canned foods will have gastric emptying in 4 hours.
Dry foods will have gastric emptying in 14-16 hours
 - Fiber- more insoluble fiber e.g., psyllium and slippery Elm
(This fiber unfortunately only decreases by 29% the incidence of vomiting, coughing and retching)
 - Dry food- round and larger shaped kibble help hairballs empty from stomach quicker than triangle shaped kibble.
3. **Lubricants** e.g., liquid paraffin 2-5mls per day in food.
 - Moves hair strands from stomach quickly before it can form into a hairball.
 - Could cause a decrease in fat soluble vitamin availability, so if used with every meal it is best to have one unaltered meal per day.
 - Best if mixed in food, as is tasteless and odorless because if syringed it could be inhaled into the lungs causing pneumonia.

Medical Management *only after*

- Dietary manipulation
- Gastric lubricants
- Clipping D.L.H

Maxalon- 0.2mg - 0.4mg per 1 kg four times a day po (orally). The problem is needing treatment every six hours though less frequent dosing may work in some cases.

Cisapride- 1.8mg per 1 kg twice a day po. Not licensed in cats. The side effects seen in humans are only seen at very high doses i.e., 3.5mg/kg twice a day for 7 days.

Ranitidine- 3.5mg per 1kg twice a day po. Not licensed in cats. Very bitter taste so cats won't like- tablet or liquid. Could try putting in gelatin capsule.

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