

THE PET POST

Pet news you can use from VPI® Pet Insurance



Foreign Body Ingestion Threatens Pets

By Dr. Ingrid Pyka

Like toddlers, pets have a tendency to chew anything they can get into their mouths. This becomes a serious and potentially life-threatening problem if the objects are swallowed. An animal ingesting a long string or ribbon can develop a linear foreign body, which is even more dangerous.

Where Do Foreign Bodies Get Stuck?

The digestive tract is essentially a long tube, passing food from the mouth, down the esophagus, into the stomach, through the lengthy small intestine, then forming stool in the colon and out the rectum.

It generally takes ingesta (all that is swallowed) from 10-24 hours to move through the entire digestive tract. Some objects, however, can actually remain in the stomach for longer periods of time, even months.

When objects are too large to pass, they usually obstruct at the stomach outflow or within the small intestine itself. With linear foreign bodies, the continual movement of the intestinal tract can literally bunch the intestines into an accordion-like mass.

If the foreign body has managed to move to the colon, it will probably successfully pass. But, defecating a sharp object may prove painful and may even need veterinary assistance. Never pull protruding objects from your pet's rectum. If it is still lodged inside, you can cause serious damage to the internal tissues.

Symptoms of Foreign Body Ingestion

Animals with ingested foreign bodies generally do not feel well. They often stop eating and/or act depressed. Initially, some cases with intestinal foreign bodies may have diarrhea.

Most patients with digestive foreign bodies exhibit vomiting. If the object has not fully clogged the digestive tract, the vomiting may be intermittent. But with a complete blockage, the dog or cat will be unable to keep anything down, including liquids. The longer the blockage lasts, the more critical the animal's condition becomes.

The Disastrous Cascade

If an intestinal obstruction has occurred, the dog or cat's condition will decline. Repeated vomiting causes dehydration and electrolyte loss. This can severely weaken the patient.

The effect of the object on the gastrointestinal tract itself will also prove devastating to the body. The pressure of the foreign body against the intestinal wall together with the continued stretching or bunching of the intestines result in poor blood

circulation to the tissues. This ultimately causes necrosis (dying off) of those tissues. In addition to being extremely painful, toxic enzymes release into the blood stream, initiating shock.

Eventually, the intestinal wall may break down and perforate (develop a hole). Once this occurs, the acidic and bacterial-contaminated intestinal contents leak into the abdomen. This results in peritonitis (infection of the abdominal space) and sepsis (infection of the bloodstream).

At this point, the patient is very critical. Without intensive intervention, this animal will die. With treatment, such patients can recover. Even the best of efforts, however, some may not survive.

Keeping Your Pet Safe

Dogs and cats maintain no more than a toddler's level of sense for their entire lives. Certainly some have a stronger tendency to swallow foreign objects, but all have the potential.

Monitor your pet's habits. Especially with puppies and kittens, keep small, swallowable items picked up and out of their way. Discuss with your veterinarian appropriately sized chew toys, considering ALL the pets in your home.

Examine all chew toys and stuffed animals you offer your pets for small pieces that may be chewed off and eaten. Monitor the toys for damage. Discard any smaller remnants. Never leave strings or ribbons within reach of your pets—especially cats.

If you suspect that your pet has swallowed a foreign body, call your veterinarian immediately. If your pet exhibits signs suspicious of foreign body ingestion, your veterinarian will guide you in the best diagnostic approach at the time.

The sooner your pet receives medical attention, the better his or her chances of full recovery with fewer complications.



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Be Informed, Be Prepared: The Real Cost of Caring for Your Pet

Spotlight: Maltese

Do you or someone you know own a Maltese? Maltese are among the top 10 most popular breeds insured by VPI Pet Insurance.

We've compiled information on the most claimed common and severe medical conditions for this breed, including average costs to treat these conditions.†

	PUPPY	ADULT	SENIOR
Ear Infection	\$140	\$140	\$160
Allergy-Related Skin Problems	\$160	\$160	\$200
Upset Stomach/Vomiting	\$300	\$310	\$350
Eye Infection	\$100	\$120	
Inflamed Intestines/Diarrhea	\$160		
Tooth Extraction from Infection		\$390	\$410
Benign Skin Growth			\$420



Slipped Spinal Disc Surgery



Urinary Bladder Cancer Surgery



Splenic Cancer Surgery

Policyholder Testimonial

VPI Helps Me Give My Dogs the Best Care

Dear VPI,

I have always wanted to provide the **best medical attention** I can for my dogs, like any parent would for their child. After reading a VPI Pet Insurance pamphlet in my vet's office, I was convinced that investing in pet insurance was a smart choice.

It is comforting to know that when I take my dogs to the vet, I will have some **financial compensation thanks to our VPI Pet Insurance policy**. For example, living in Tucson, Arizona we have quite a few rattlesnakes. Our two terriers have a tendency to go after the rattlesnakes and, unfortunately, they tend to get bitten by them as well. Without hesitation I take my dogs in to seek proper medical attention. **There have been some claims where I have been reimbursed 100%!**

I have been a VPI policyholder since 2003 and have seen some positive improvements in the company over the years. If someone were considering pet insurance, I would say yes in a heartbeat. **Investing in pet insurance is not just a way to protect your pets; it's a way to protect your wallet.** Thanks, VPI, for helping me provide the best care I can for my dogs!

Sincerely,
Tracy Noland
Tucson, AZ
VPI policyholder
since 2003



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*A \$35 fee is billed by Pet Poison Helpline. PPH is not affiliated with VPI.

†Disease/Condition rankings are based on your pet's breed and age. Cost estimates are for a pet of comparable size and age, treated by a veterinarian in the state of California. The actual Cost of Care for your pet may vary. The most common Diseases or Conditions for your pet were determined through a review of VPI Pet Insurance national claim data. We obtained this information from claimed amounts associated with a Primary Diagnosis for pets of the same species, breed, and age group as your pet. We used data from claims that were: (1) submitted under VPI Pet Insurance policies with policy terms ending between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2008, and (2) entered into our system before November 1, 2008. We counted all claims made under each Diagnosis Code during each policy term as a single event. We combined all events for each Diagnosis Code, breed, and age group, and sorted the data to determine the top ten Diseases or Conditions for each grouping. We only considered policies covering pets aged nine years or less at the beginning of the policy term. We did not include data involving rare canine and feline breeds.

Insurance plans are offered and administered by Veterinary Pet Insurance Company in California and DVM Insurance Agency in all other states. Underwritten by Veterinary Pet Insurance Company (CA), Brea, CA, an A.M. Best A rated company (2012); National Casualty Company (all other states), Madison, WI, an A.M. Best A+ rated company (2012). 12GRP1914

