

Urban Myths Surrounding Your Pet's Private Problems

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It never ceases to amaze me the number of people who only think of coming to see us with pet health problems, after they have consulted all manner of people. This may include their auntie in Tauranga who knows everything, or a friend who used to work in a pet shop. Often their advice is to reinforce some of the urban myths surrounding your pet's health. Allow me to share some with you to help you decide whether you should see us first.

My pet's still itchy and therefore the flea treatment hasn't worked. Itchy skin in pets can be caused by a hundred conditions other than fleas. A proper diagnosis is important so that appropriate treatment can be given, not just a flea spray and a prayer.

My dog's dragging his bottom and therefore has worms. He may have worms and certainly he should be treated for worms every three months. However, it is more likely his anal glands either side of his bottom are full. Simply emptying these can give instant relief. Or perhaps he's practising for the downhill slalom?

Old dogs that are stiff and unable to easily rise are not in pain but just old. We agree they are old, but are also usually in some degree of pain and appropriate pain relief can bring a huge increase in mobility and well-being during those latter years.

My 50kg Labrador cannot lose weight. Something can ALWAYS be done to get pets to lose weight, whether they're neutered, old, hypothyroid or plain lazy. Don't kid yourself – get some good advice from the vet. Neutering the owner can sometimes help.

Antisocial cats are probably ALWAYS going to be antisocial. True! Try to live with them rather than resist – it only ends in tears!

Old dogs that puff and wheeze and lag behind on a walk are just showing their age. Maybe, but possibly they have heart or lung disease, which with a proper diagnosis can be effectively treated, extending the quality and quantity of life. Look out for a persistent cough, weakness and weight loss.

Annual boosters are unnecessary for dogs and cats. Protection against some of the diseases now lasts for two or more years. However protection against some important diseases lasts only one year. We need to see your pet every year to boost these ones and give them a thorough check up.

All dogs with vomiting and diarrhoea will come right if you starve them for 24 hours. Nope! Whilst dietary indiscretion causing a tummy upset is a common cause of vomiting and diarrhoea there are lots of other very serious causes. A bland diet (boiled chicken and rice) can settle things, but DO ask advice from your vet if the symptoms continue. Invest in a good carpet cleaner in the meantime.