

Foreign Body Prevention



Dogs, cats, and some small exotic pets are notorious for eating things they should not. Without hands, animals investigate things in their environment by smelling and sometimes tasting. Unfortunately, this curiosity can cause toxicity, severe illness, and possible gastric or intestinal obstruction. Non-food items that pets eat are known as foreign bodies and they can cause significant problems.

One of the more common and potentially life-threatening conditions seen in veterinary practice is foreign body obstruction. Although some foreign bodies do pass uneventfully through the intestinal tract, if an obstruction occurs, surgical removal of the blocked object is the only treatment.

Almost anything within paw's reach can become a foreign body for a curious pet who tends to eat non-food items. Dogs are more likely than cats to ingest foreign bodies, but certain things, such as string, are irresistible to cats. Items that pets commonly ingest include bones, small toys, coins, rocks, hair ties, string and dental floss, corn cobs, small clothing items, such as socks and underwear, feminine products, bedding, fabric, and rugs.

Since foreign-body ingestion can have devastating consequences, prevention is the best way to keep your pet safe. Keep items your pet may be tempted to ingest out of reach by practicing these safety tips; keep children's toys off the floor or keep toy areas closed off to your pet. Keep trash baskets stowed safely out of reach in cupboards or closets. Never pour cooking liquids or grill grease onto rocks or gravel. Store all string and yarn in a pet-proof container. Never give your pet bones as a treat and consider crate training.