



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 10.8.3 – August 21, 2010

Welcome back to another issue of Dog Talk Weekly. I just received a letter from a woman who is seeking ways to help her dog who is suffering from kidney disease. Since this is such a common problem in dogs, I thought I'd do a feature article on it.

Sadly, this is a severe life-threatening disease that is usually fatal, so I hope I can give you some valuable ways to help prevent it in the first place as well as some tips to treating a dog with the condition. Two of my dogs died from this illness, so I fully grasp what she and her family is going through. It makes you wish you could create magic, doesn't it?

Do You Have Questions?... if you have any questions about dogs that you'd like me to answer, simply send them to me via my contact form here:

<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

Thank you.

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## Feature Story: Kidney Disease – Why Does It Happen

Before I get into it, let me point you to this web site:

<http://www.dogaware.com/health/kidney.html#start>

The owner of this site has gathered together some great information on kidney disease and treatments. She also provides links to a good number of official sites where you can get expert information. Two specific ones are:

**[Dietary management of chronic renal failure](#)** General information on the role of protein, phosphorus, fat, sodium, potassium and calcium in the diet of dogs with chronic renal failure.

**[NAT Nutritional Analysis Tools and System](#)** Calculate the nutrient content of various foods in a meal

And these:

[USDA Nutrient Database](#) or [Nutrition Facts Database](#) Look up the nutrient content of individual foods

[Raw Meaty Bones Analysis](#) Lists the nutrient content of several different raw meaty bones

[Nutrition Counter](#) Lists the amount of sodium (Na), Potassium (K) and Phosphorus in various foods

She also lists a few others that you might find useful.

Run your own Google search: "dog kidney disease diet" and you will get a good list of resources worth checking out.

### **Kidney Disease – Why Does It Happen?**

Firstly, kidney disease can be inherited, so it is important to look out for this when adopting or buying a dog. If the parents had the disease, there's a good chance yours will develop it, too. But there are other reasons dogs develop kidney disease, from ingesting toxins and poisons to wear and tear and simply old age.

Now, you're probably aware that toxins can come from the foods you feed your dog, especially commercial foods. They contain a large number of added ingredients and chemicals that your dog normally would not get in the wild. A dog's body can not adapt to these toxins as readily as you might expect.

Your first step, then, is prevention – making sure your dog gets healthy, nutritious food and is prevented from eating or drinking dangerous products, like anti-freeze which they take to easily because of its sweet taste.

Read the labels on dog food to make sure the first few ingredients are not corn and wheat, as these are mostly fillers. Top of the list should be things like chicken or beef (not byproducts). Because of the recent recall related to problems with gluten, look for products that do not show this in their list of ingredients. Your pet store clerk can advise you on the best products, but do expect to pay a higher price.

Tyler has gone off the food I've been feeding him for 4 years. He now throws up occasionally, which he didn't do before. The only way I could get him to eat was to put warm water on his food, but he still was acting sluggish. The vet suggested a gluten-free diet. A trip to the pet store produced a new dog food that he seems to like.

I'm impressed with the ingredients shown, which include items I've never seen in dry kibble before: fresh chicken, turkey, duck, salmon, and egg protein (to maintain muscle tone). Tomatoes, blueberries, apples, cranberries, rosemary extract, parsley, spinach, potatoes, carrots and peas. Flaxseed (a natural, highly palatable source of Omega-3 fatty acids (promote skin and coat health). Dried chicory root (to maintain healthy digestive tract). Chicken fat (Omega-6). This food contains no artificial color or flavor, something that can have an adverse effect on your dog.

Look for labels like this when you choose the best food for your dog. This particular 35 lb. bag cost me over \$70, compared to the one I've previously bought at \$40. The additional money is worth it if it keeps my dog healthy.

### **Causes of kidney disease in dogs**

There are many causes of kidney disease in dogs which can include:

- Age
- Viral, fungal, or bacterial infections
- Parasites
- Cancer
- Amyloidosis (caused by abnormal deposits of a certain type of protein in the kidney)
- Inflammation
- [Autoimmune](#) diseases
- Trauma
- Toxic reaction to poisons or medications
- Congenital and inherited disorders

These signs of kidney disease can also appear in other diseases as well, so if you see any of these symptoms, let your veterinarian determine the true cause.

- Increased water consumption (polydipsia)
- Increased urination volume (polyuria)
- Decreased urination (oliguria)
- Lack of urination (anuria)
- Voiding urine during the night (nocturia)
- Blood in urine (hematuria)
- Decreased appetite (anorexia)
- Vomiting
- Weight loss
- Lethargy
- Diarrhea
- Hunched over posture or reluctance to move
- Poor or unkempt hair coat

These additional signs might become evident during a physical examination:

- Pale mucous membranes (e.g., gums) from a decrease in red blood cell production resulting in [anemia](#)
- Enlarged and/or painful kidneys or small, irregular kidneys
- [Ulcers](#) in the mouth, most commonly on the tongue, gum, or inside of the cheek
- Bad breath (halitosis) due to toxic substances building up in the blood stream
- [Dehydration](#)
- Swelling of the limbs due to accumulation of fluid (subcutaneous edema)
- Enlarged abdomen due to accumulation of fluid (ascites)
- High blood pressure
- Changes in the [retina](#) due to high blood pressure
- Softening of the bones (rubber jaw) in young dogs with hereditary kidney disease (fibrous osteodystrophy)

You can read more on this excellent site:

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=1+1372&aid=350>

### **Dietary Changes can help**

There has been a lot of controversy over cutting back on protein when your dog has kidney disease. Researchers have since determined that doing so can actually hinder your dog's health because it needs those essential nutrients. The best option is a high quality protein diet that is of high quality to help decrease the stress on the diseased kidneys.

It is crucial, however, that you maintain contact with your veterinarian during your dog's condition to ensure that he or she is getting the required amounts of protein while avoiding anemia and hypoalbuminemia, which might indicate the need to increase the protein.

A sick dog might do better on several small meals a day, rather than one or two large ones. Adding cottage cheese, yogurt or chopped vegetables, or warming the food (add warm water) can help encourage your dog to eat.

See that your dog gets sufficient essential fatty acids, electrolytes and vitamins. Your veterinarian can best advise you on these and supplements that your dog needs. This is not the time for self-help. The only way to ensure your dog is getting the right treatment in the proper quantities is through blood tests and professional monitoring.

As you know, various elements (vitamins, minerals, etc.) must work together and if one is missing, lacking or excessive, your dog's health will suffer. Your dog needs the right mixture of calcium, potassium, vitamin D, A, B, and C, phosphates, and salt intake.

I don't want to duplicate the valuable information that you can find on that site, so I'll simply refer you there if you want to read more on this topic.

## **Regular Sections:**

### **- Nutrition**

What are Essential Fatty Acids and why does your dog need them?

These are nutrients that your dog's body cannot reproduce and must be provided through the food you provide. They play a major role in your dog's energy production and the health of her cellular membranes that run throughout the body. EFAs also are vital to normal growth and functioning of the muscles, nerves and organs. They can help dogs with skin problems and are highly beneficial to the fur, nails and hair also.

If your dog's skin and coat are not healthy (flaky skin, dull and falling fur), adding EFAs will improve them while boosting her immune function.

The improvements can show themselves in as little as a day or it might take a month, but in either case, you will be doing your dog a big favor by providing sufficient EFAs.

Here are some natural sources:

Soybean oil, cod liver oil, wheat germ oil, flaxseed oil, rosemary and garlic.

"Garlic helps to eliminate worms, strengthen digestion and beneficially stimulate the intestinal tract. It is also indicated for animals that tend to be overweight or suffer hip pain from arthritis or dysplasia." *Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, author of Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health For Dogs and Cats.*

### **- Dog Care**

Many dogs become overweight at some point, often as they age and become less active. Regardless of when your dog packs on the pounds, it's important to her length and quality of life to get her back to a normal weight.

Make sure she is getting the correct type of dog food for her age. There are high protein diets for extremely active dogs that are not good for a "normally active" or sedentary dog. Choose the high protein only if your dog is involved in high energy exercise over a

long time, such as hunting prey or competing in agility and other trials. Otherwise, select a good quality food that has a lower protein count.

Check that you are giving your dog the right quantity of food for her size and build. Her breed could be a factor as well, as some dogs tend to carry higher weight than others. Plus, some dogs seem more prone to become overweight. Read the food label and feed your dog according to her weight.

Here's how you can check her weight at home.

Step on the scales yourself and take your weight. Then, hold the dog in your arms and take another reading. Deduct the difference. Remember that while she might have been a healthy weight all of her life so far, she could have gained some since you last checked. Compare the new figure to the normal weight for that breed. This will tell you if she needs to lose weight.

Minimize food treats. Reward her with something even more pleasant – play or affection. Quite often, dogs prefer the social rewards over the food, most likely because they are social animals who love to interact with us.

Reduce the meals to several smaller ones throughout the day rather than two large ones. Also, do not feed her too late into the evening. While she is sleeping and less active, the food is more likely to turn into fat because her digestion will have slowed down at that point.

And of course, add exercise several times a day. If you now walk around the neighborhood once a day, up it to twice a day, or even three shorter walks a day.

If she does not lose weight under the new feeding and exercise regimen, talk to your vet to see if there might be some other reason for her to be overweight.

### **- Dog Training**

Dogs learn best if they are confident as opposed to being apprehensive and nervous. If your dog lacks confidence, start working to build it up first before venturing into dog training that goes beyond the basics.

Always use the same tone when issuing commands. Always use the same commands (make sure other family members use them, too). Always give praise verbally and physically (rather than a food treat). The social interaction will help to build her confidence, whereas a treat does not involve socialization. The more she socializes with you, the better she will feel about your relationship.

Never yell at your dog, but do use a stern tone, otherwise she might not grasp that you are serious in your commands.

Do not confuse her by contradicting yourself. If you are poised and confident with her one day and impatient and agitated on another day, she will get confused which will add to her nervousness and lack of confidence.

Let her meet other people and dogs so she can socialize. This will help her to understand how to interact with others so that she feels more confident.

### **- Dog Trivia**

Why does your dog lick your face? Sorry to burst your bubble, but according to animal behaviorist Katherine A. Houpt, V.M.D., Ph.D., of the College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, it's because your dog is hungry. Hard to believe, I know. Tyler licks my face AFTER he's eaten, so I'm not convinced. But apparently, her thinking is that puppies lick their mother's face to solicit food. Be careful how you respond to this request or you could end up with an overweight pooch.

**- Free Stuff**

I'm working on something for you. Watch this space and your email for notification when it's ready for you to download.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

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That's it for this issue. I hope you enjoyed it.

Until next week...

Get out there and have fun with your dog. Take some great photos.
Collect wonderful memories.

Sylvia

P.S.: Don't forget to send me your stories and ideas for upcoming issues of Dog Talk Weekly. Just send them to me through my contact form here:
<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

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<http://dogtalkweekly.com/dogblog/>

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You can access the archives here:
<http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/archives.htm>

Dog Nutrition is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at
<http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

Puppy Parenting Course: Are you drowning in a sea of questions about raising your puppy the right way? This 24-week course feeds you all the information you need in bite-size portions that you can use during your puppy's early years. Get a free trial today.
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