

ASSIGNMENT 216 TASK 1 HANDOUT

DOG HEALTH

Condition of Skin and Coat

The general condition of your dog's skin and coat are good indicators of his health. A healthy coat should be shiny and smooth, not brittle or coarse, and healthy skin should be supple and clear, not greasy, flaky, or bumpy. Illness or stress, especially if chronic or long-standing, will affect the appearance of your dog's coat, particularly its shine and texture. Many dogs will shed excessively when under stress. Some of the more common examples of diseases that can affect your dog's coat include hormone imbalances or other metabolic problems (hypothyroidism), digestive disturbances, such as chronic diarrhoea, internal (intestinal worms) and external (fleas, ticks, mange mites) parasites, and cancer. Arthritis or obesity can cause skin problems, such as dandruff or matting, if the dog cannot groom himself. Many skin conditions will affect the shininess and the appearance of your dog's coat. Allergic skin disease and seborrhoea cause itching and changes in the production of skin oils, resulting in a dull coat and excessive shedding, either in patches or over the entire body.

Behaviour and posture

The way a healthy dog behaves is individual and depends on its age, breed or type and past experience. However, most dogs are playful, sociable animals and they enjoy playing together with toys, people and other dogs. Changes in behaviour may suggest that something is wrong with a dog's health. Play is an important part of getting along with people and other dogs, and although dogs will spend some time playing alone with toys, they should have regular opportunities for interactive playing. Dogs are intelligent animals and can suffer from boredom. If your dog is bored, and does not have enough to do, it may suffer or engage in inappropriate behaviour.

Abnormal behaviour such as excessive barking, whimpering, lethargy and not eating or drinking should be investigated by a vet.



Appetite and water intake

Every dog is an individual so the perfect diet will depend on their age, size, activity levels, and what they like! How much food your dog needs will depend on their activity levels and metabolism, so you'll need to monitor their weight and body condition. Be careful not to overfeed your dog. Obesity increases your dog's risk of arthritis, diabetes and heart disease. Adult dogs should normally be fed a complete meal of twice a day. It can be wet or dry however kibble is good for a dog's teeth. Because loss of appetite in dogs can indicate illness, it is important to seek veterinary care if you notice changes in your dog's eating habits. It is especially important to respond promptly to a refusal to eat in dogs that usually eat well.

In general, dogs should drink approximately 1 ounce of water (1/8 of a cup) per pound of body weight each day. However, there are many factors that can affect how much your dog will drink, so you should not be restricting your dog's water intake. Unless directed by your veterinarian, it's not necessary to measure out the exact water amounts your dog drinks. Just make sure that your dog has plenty of fresh, clean water every day. A dog that is not drinking enough could end up with a urinary tract infection or kidney problems.

Movement

The basis of describing movement is the gait. The term gait simply refers to the pattern of footsteps at different speeds. Each gate is distinguished by a specific pattern of footfall and rhythm. Dogs have four main gaits. From slowest to fastest, they are the walk, trot, canter and gallop. Between the walk and trot is a transitional gate called the amble. Dogs that move smoothly between gaits will perform better and be less likely to suffer injuries.

By understanding the appearance of the normal canine gaits, you can recognise a gait abnormality that might indicate an injury or fatigue, and take timely actions, such as resting the dog or making a veterinary appointment. Any lameness or stiffness in the joints is abnormal and should be investigated by a vet.

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Condition of eyes, ears, nose and mouth

Eyes

Healthy eyes in dogs should be clean, bright, and clear of any dirt or debris. You shouldn't see discharge or redness around the eye and the white part should be white, not red or yellow. Looking after your dog's eyes should form part of their regular grooming routine.

Ears

A normal dog ear should have nice, pink skin that isn't inflamed or angry looking. The skin should be supple and soft with a healthy glow to it. Conversely, an ear that glows an angry red or has ulcers, feels or looks greasy, or has a discharge or flaky skin is not normal.

Nose

If your dog is healthy then its nose should be the same size on both the left and right side and it should also feel moist to mildly dry. In addition, consistent in-and-out airflow should be noticed from both nostrils. The nose should not be runny or have discharge coming from it.

Mouth

For the most part, a healthy dog has gums that are bubble-gum pink, or even salmon pink. Some other dog breeds have naturally dark-coloured or spotted gums, and this can be normal for your pet. However, if their gum colour changes over time, that may be concerning. Normal gums are moist and slippery. A dog's mouth should be free from ulcers or sores and teeth should be cleaned regularly to remove any tartar or plaque.

Appearance of urine and faeces

The normal colour of urine from a healthy dog or cat is transparent yellow. Veterinarians sometimes refer to this colour as "straw yellow," "pale gold," "amber," or "clear yellow." The most accurate way to assess urine colour is to examine it in a clear plastic or glass container against a white background. Dog urine that is orange is typically a sign of icterus or jaundice and black urine could indicate trauma. You should see a vet for either of these.

Faeces should be brown, solid but a bit squishy, in one log-like piece, and sized proportionate to the amount of food your dog ate. Taking a closer look at what comes out can give you insight into your dog's health. Healthy dog poop should be compact, moist and hold its shape when picked up. If the poo is runny or watery, this could be a sign of intestinal upset.

Signs of stress or pain that dogs may show

Vocal signs

Vocalisation is normal self-expression in dogs but may be intensified when they are under stress. Dogs that are afraid or tense may whine, bark or growl. A dog's bark may increase the more stressed they get.



Visual signs

Dogs yawn when they are tired or bored, they also yawn when stressed. A stressful yawn is more prolonged and intense than a sleepy yawn. Dogs may also drool and lick excessively when nervous. They may open their eyes really wide and show more sclera (white) than usual, giving them a startled appearance. Ears that are usually relaxed or alert are pinned back against the head. When scared, dogs may also tuck their tails or become quite rigid. Shedding increases when a dog is anxious. If your dog is panting even though he has not exercised, he may be experiencing stress.

The procedure to follow if an animal is found to be sick or injured

- Reporting and recording - Report to the manager immediately if a dog is sick or injured. A vet may need to be contacted in some cases. Record the illness or injury in the animal's records and staff communication book so that all staff members are aware. Record any signs or symptoms, especially anything new relating to the illness or injury.

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- Monitoring - Keep a close eye on the dog and monitor behaviour, eating and drinking and movement. Check on the sick or injured animal at least every hour and record your findings. Look out for any new symptoms.
- Isolating - Isolate a sick or injured dog away from other dogs to prevent cross-contamination or further injury.
- When to call the vet - Always consult your manager before contacting the vet. Treatment from a vet should never be put off if the dog is injured or sick. If you notice severe signs of stress, weight loss, not moving or laboured breathing you must contact the vet immediately.

The records kept to help maintain the health of animals

- Age - Knowing the age of a dog is important as they will have different requirements and will behave differently at certain ages. Dog behaviour changes as they become older so it is important to know the types of behaviour to expect relating to their age.
- Type - The breed of dog should be known and recorded for identification purposes. Also different breeds of dogs behave in different ways and have certain characteristics and temperaments.
- Diet - The type of feed and amount should be recorded so that they are fed the correct quantities and food types needed to keep them healthy. It is also useful to see how much they are eating to check they are in good health and are receiving the correct requirements. If a dog has a diet related illness, recording their diet will help to eliminate any foods that maybe making them ill.
- Weight - A horses weight should be recorded to ensure there is no drastic weight gain or weight loss as this could indicate a serious health problem that may need addressing. Weight gain could lead to heart problems and diabetes and weight loss could be a sign of a serious illness such as cancer.
- Comments - Extra information relating to behaviour, sleeping patterns etc. should be added to provide a better understanding of the animals health.

