Importance of a Physical Examination for Incoming Shelter Animals

Kathleen Makolinski, DVM
Clinical Instructor in Shelter Medicine
You’ll miss far more by not looking than by not knowing...

Let’s Hear from You...
Examine Shelter Animals at Time of **Intake**

**Why is this valuable and necessary?**

- Review of animal’s history (if known)
  - Any medical/behavior concerns?
  - On any medication?
  - If stray, is finder interested in adopting?
  - Reason for surrender?
Examine Shelter Animals at Time of **Intake**

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- Search for microchip or identifying features to speed reclaim

Does animal need to have anything scheduled?
(examples: spay/neuter, behavior assessment, grooming)
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- Does animal need to have anything scheduled?
  (examples: spay/neuter, behavior assessment, grooming)
  - Save time and $$$

Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters

Each animal’s health status should be evaluated and monitored beginning at intake and regularly thereafter. This allows any problems or changes that develop during an animal’s shelter stay to be recognized, distinguished from pre-existing conditions, and addressed.
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Each animal should receive a health evaluation at intake to check for signs of infectious disease and/or problems that require immediate attention. Intake evaluations should be documented in the medical record.

Starting at time of intake and continuing throughout their stay, healthy animals should not be housed or handled with animals who have signs of illness.

http://www.sheltervet.org/shelter-standards-task-force
History should be used to alert staff to the presence of potential problems, such as aggression or anxiety, and to inform staff of any individual needs, so that proper care can be provided for that animal.

Examine Shelter Animals at Time of Intake

- Also gives opportunity to administer:
  - Vaccinations
  - Deworming
  - Flea/tick control
- Perform diagnostic testing according to shelter’s protocols
- Take picture of animal
- Place identifying collar on animal
Examine Shelter Animals at Time of **Intake**

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**I would like to go home as soon as possible.**

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*Put animal on pathway to receive optimal care while in shelter, decrease time spent in shelter, and maximize chance for live release,*
Examine Shelter Animals at Time of **Intake**

Check your state’s Veterinary Practice Act to determine who is allowed to perform intake evaluations

In general, only licensed veterinarians are allowed to diagnose animal conditions and devise treatment plans.

The goal of an intake evaluation is **NOT** diagnosis of disease. The goal is simple recognition of conditions that should be further assessed.
A Good Experience for Everyone

- Appropriate and humane animal handling
A Good Experience for Everyone

• Appropriate and humane animal handling
• Safe and controlled environment

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• Minimize time working with animal
  - Have everything in place
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• Minimize external stimuli
  - Lights low/quiet room
  - Decrease olfactory/visual clues

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• Minimize time working with animal
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  - Lights low/quiet room
  - Decrease olfactory/visual clues
• Under direct supervision of veterinarian, appropriate use of drugs when needed
A Good Experience for Everyone

Webinars

Feline Communication
When a cat rolls on her side, is she requesting a belly rub or is she preparing to defend herself? Learn what cats are saying with their eyes, ears and whiskers, their weight shifts, and body postures. Discover how you can use your own body language to show cats that you are not a threat.

Canine Body Language
Wreaking body language down one body part at a time can be helpful in building your observation and interpretation skills. It is vitally important to consider the whole body and the context though, in order to truly "hear" what a dog is saying. Then you can watch the dogs in your life and start to learn what they’re telling you.

Humane Feline Handling 101
How can feline caregivers avoid bites and scratches with minimal stress to both the cat and human? This introductory webinar on humane feline handling will show you:
• The proper way to pick up cats and place them in crates or transfer cages
• Tools to use with more defensive or fearful cats (and what tools should never be used)

Defensive Dog Handling
Animal welfare professionals who handle dogs safely and effectively reduce aggression and fear, ensuring that fewer bites occur. Learn how to use your own body language to defuse potential aggression in dogs. Attendees will learn how to effectively use common types of dog handling equipment found in a shelter setting.

www.ascpapro.org
A Good Experience for Everyone

What professionals need to know about Low Stress Handling.

Based in behavioral science, Dr. Sophia Yin’s Low Stress Handling techniques are used worldwide by professionals concerned with the well-being of animals and the safety of the people who care for them.

Correct Cat Towel Restraint

Restraining An Aggressive Cat

WATCH VIDEO

http://drsophiayin.com/lowstress

Animal Evaluation

• Best for staff to be trained by veterinarian
• Develop a systematic approach for checking whole animal and follow same order each time
• Best to work in a team
• Don’t spread disease!
• If determined to be unsafe to perform any/all parts of exam, get help or give animal ‘cool down’ period - see if can work with animal later

KORET SHELTER MEDICINE PROGRAM

www.sheltermedicine.com

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Animal Evaluation

Signalment
• Name
• Species
• Breed/mix
• Color
• Age
• Sexual status
  (female or male, spayed or neutered)

Age
www.animalsheltering.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESTIMATED AGE</th>
<th>CAT’S TEETH</th>
<th>DOG’S TEETH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-4 weeks</td>
<td>Deciduous (baby) incisors coming in</td>
<td>No noticeable tooth growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>Deciduous (baby) canines coming in</td>
<td>Deciduous (baby) canines coming in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 weeks</td>
<td>Deciduous (baby) premolars coming in on lower jaw</td>
<td>Deciduous (baby) incisors and premolars coming in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>All deciduous (baby) teeth are in</td>
<td>All deciduous (baby) teeth are in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>Permanent incisors coming in</td>
<td>No noticeable permanent tooth growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-24 months</td>
<td>Permanent canines, premolars, and molars coming in</td>
<td>Permanent incisors coming in; some growth of premolars and molars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7 months</td>
<td>All permanent teeth in by 6 months</td>
<td>Permanent canines, premolars, and molars coming in all teeth by 7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Teeth white and clean</td>
<td>Teeth white and clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Teeth may appear dull with some tartar build-up (yellowish on back teeth)</td>
<td>Teeth may appear dull with some tartar build-up (yellowing) on back teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>Teeth show more tartar build-up (on all teeth) and some tooth wear</td>
<td>Teeth show more tartar build-up (on all teeth) and some tooth wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Teeth show increased wear and disease; pigment visible on gums</td>
<td>Teeth show increased wear and disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>Teeth are worn and show heavy tartar build-up; some teeth may be missing</td>
<td>Teeth are worn and show heavy tartar build-up; some teeth may be missing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©1998 The Humane Society of the United States

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Aging Kittens

A kitten’s permanent incisors (the 12 teeth in the front of the mouth) come in at a predictable rate. The following pictures can be used as a guideline for determining the age of kittens between 12 and 26 weeks of age.

- 13 weeks
- 12 weeks
- 11 weeks
- 10 weeks
- 8 weeks
- 4 weeks
- 3 weeks
- 2 weeks
- Eyes open

Healthy kittens weigh about 1 pound for every month of age. So, a 2 pound kitten is about 2 months old.

Sexual Status

In cats ... This can be tricky!

- Unneutered Male
- Female
- Neutered Male
Sexual Status

In kittens ... This can be even trickier!

Female kitten
Male kitten

Pictures courtesy of Dr. Tami McReynolds

Each spay/neuter program should choose a consistent means of identifying animals that have been neutered. Tattooing the ventral abdominal skin is recommended for females. Sterile instrumentation should be used to apply the tattoo regardless of the method chosen.
Sexual Status

For free-roaming cats, unilateral ear tipping is the recommended method for identifying cats that have been neutered. Removal of an ear tip represents the universally accepted international standard for identifying a neutered free-roaming cat.
Do All Reproductive Parts Look Normal?

Testicles
- Both descended into scrotum?
- Tumors?

Penis/Prepuce
- Discharge?
- Swelling?

Mammary glands
- Swelling?
- Heat?
- Tumors?
- Lactating?
- Abnormal discharge?

Vulva
- Discharge?
- Prolapsed vagina/uterus?
- Tumors?

Sexual Status – CASE STUDY

You are a veterinary technician who is performing intake exams at an animal shelter. Presented with a 2 year male cat with no palpable testicles.

*Is he already neutered or is he cryptorchid?*
Sexual Status – CASE STUDY

Penis of Male Cat

- Spines occur because of male sex hormones
- They are present by 12 weeks and prominent by 6 months
- Spines regress within about 6 weeks if neutered after puberty
- Very rarely, a cat could be a bilateral cryptorchid, spines would differentiate this situation from a neutered cat
- A cat may be a unilateral cryptorchid and may have only had the scrotal testicle removed, spines would indicate the presence of a testicle in the abdomen or inguinal canal
Animal Evaluation

Check for identification

- Tags
- Writing on collar
- Tattoos (ear, abdomen, thigh)

Animal Evaluation

Check for identification

- Scanning for microchip
  - Slowly, in a methodical fashion
  - Using a scanner that detects ALL chips
  - Fresh batteries!
Animal Evaluation

Check for identification

Diagram B

Shelter Medicine
SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Animal Evaluation

Check for identification

AAHA Microchipping and Scanning Companion Animals Module

Microchipping & Scanning Companion Animals

This free, one-hour, online course is designed for staff at companion animal veterinary clinics and animal shelter organizations in the United States.

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Animal Evaluation

Check for identification

AAHA Universal Pet Microchip Lookup

The Microchip is enrolled with:

Found Animals REGISTRY.

Date Last Updated: 11/10/2013
For more information please call: 855-PET-CHIP (855-738-2447)
Or visit: http://www.found.org

Date Last Updated: 10/17/2013
For more information please call: 888-567-2424
Or visit: http://www.24PetWatch.com/

Animal Evaluation

Weight

TPR
• Temperature
• Pulse (beats/minute)
• Respiratory rate (breaths/minute)

Recent history
• Cough
• Sneeze
• Vomit
• Diarrhea

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Cat and Dog normals

Temperature
- Normal for dogs and cats: 100 – 102.8
- Lower in neonates:
  - Week 1: 95-99
  - Week 2 – 3: 97-100
  - Nursing: 99-101
  - Greater than 106.5 = emergency

Pulse:
- Rate: Count for 6 seconds and multiply by ten
- Normal for dogs varies:
  - Large dogs: 60-100
  - Medium dogs: 80-120
  - Small dogs: 90-140
- Cats: 120-250
- Neonates: 200-250

Respiratory rate:
- Count respiratory rate while animal is at rest
- Inspiration and expiration counts as one breath
- Normal rate in dogs: 15-30 breaths/minute
- Normal rate in cats: 20-30 breaths/minute

From a Distance ...

- Attitude and stress level
- Evidence of neurologic or musculoskeletal disease
- Initial assessment of behavior (not to replace formal behavior evaluation)
- General body condition
From the tip of the nose to the end of the tail...

With extra emphasis on those areas that are determined to be of importance from history or initial observations
Head & Neck

Face
  - Any signs of fear? Aggression?
  - Asymmetry?

Eyes & Eyelids
  - Abnormality in size/position of eyeballs?
  - Discharge?
  - Anisocoria?
  - Tumor?
Head & Neck

Nose & Nares
- Discharge (color)?
- Airflow?
- Swelling?

Ears
- Carriage and position
- Discharge?
- Odor?
- Red?
- Swelling?
- Shaking head?
- Scratching?
- Evidence of ear mites?

Lips & Mouth
- Mucous membrane color
- Capillary refill time
- Severe halitosis?
- Periodontal disease?
- Tartar?
- Tumor?
- Broken/missing/worn teeth?
Head & Neck

Salivary glands swollen?
Peripheral lymph nodes swollen?
- Submandibular
- Prescapular
Thyroid gland in cats enlarged?
Trachea
- Cough elicited upon palpation?
Listening to Heart and Lungs
(Thoracic Auscultation)

Heart
- Feel femoral pulses simultaneously
- Murmurs (abnormal sounds) or arrhythmias (abnormal rhythm)?

Canine Cardiology: A multimedia guide to cardiac auscultation
www.vetvisions.com

Valves – Point of Maximum Intensities (PMIs) (Dog)
Listening to Heart and Lungs
(Thoracic Auscultation)

Lungs
- Different than usual?
- Are sounds decreased or absent? Increased or abnormal?
- Is there increased respiratory effort?
Abdomen

Palpate for hernias
- Umbilical?
- Inguinal?

Tumors?
Pregnant?

Gently palpate abdomen
- Obvious masses?
- Pain?

Hind End

Anus
- Evidence of diarrhea?
- Discharge from anal sacs?
- Tumors?
- Prolapsed rectum?
Musculoskeletal

Gait abnormalities?
Lameness?
Palpate vertebral column and limbs
  • Pain?
  • Swelling?
  • Fractures?
  • Muscle atrophy?
  • Decreased range of motion?

Skin

Dehydrated?
Hair loss?
External parasites?
Tumors?
Abscess?
Scabs/other lesions?
Lacerations?
Overgrown or embedded nails?
What to do with Exam Findings?

• Enter in animal’s record

• Speed reclaim of animal
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What to do with Exam Findings?

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- Schedule necessary services
- Develop list of animals who need exam, diagnosis, treatment by vet
- Monitor animal for changes over course of shelter stay
- Communicate conditions to potential adopters
- Obtain immediate veterinary care when needed
Emergencies!

- Fever > 105 F or temperature < 99 F
- Severe dehydration
- Trouble breathing/open mouth breathing in cats
- Seizures
- Blue/very pale/brick red gums
- Emaciation
- Recent history of being hit by car
- Acute severe lameness or injury with bone exposed
- Major wound or fresh wound requiring sutures
- Injury to eye
- Bleeding or easy/extensive bruising
- Suddenly swollen abdomen
- Cat with possible urinary blockage (unable to urinate)
- Pregnant animal in distress
- Evidence of pain – restlessness, vocalizing, panting, failure to bear weight on limb or any condition that would be expected to be painful

Infectious Disease Red Flags!

- Isolate from other animals, use personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling
- Bloody or severe diarrhea
- Vomit or diarrhea with other signs of disease
- Neurological signs
- Oral ulcers with fever or swelling
- Discharge from eyes/nose
- Circular patches of hair loss
- Dead in cage – check for parvovirus/panleukopenia
**HEALTH CHECK FORM**

**EVALUATOR:** __________________

**Date:** ________________  **Animal ID #:** ________________  **Kennel:** ________________

**Description (species, breed, color, sex, age, double check ID):** __________________________________________

1. **Overall appearance:** Bright, alert, responsive □ Other: __________________

2. **Initial behavior assessment:** Social, friendly □ Other: __________________

3. **Hydration:** No sign of dehydration □ Other: __________________

4. **Musculoskeletal:** Lameness or asymmetry? No □ Yes/other: __________________
   Worn toenails, declawed, extra toes? No □ Yes/other: __________________

5. **Skin:**
   - Fleas/ticks? No □ Yes: __________________
   - Hair loss/itching? No □ Yes: __________________
   - Masses or sores? No □ Yes: __________________

6. **Body Condition Score:** ______/9

7. **Heart and lungs:** Heart murmur heard? No □ Yes: __________________
   Lungs clear? Yes □ No: __________________

8. **Ears:** Clean and free of inflammation or discharge □ Other: __________________

9. **Eyes:** Clear, no discharge, white sclera □ Other: __________________

10. **Nose:** Clear, no discharge □ Other: __________________

11. **Mouth:**
   - Clean teeth □ Moderate dental disease □ Severe dental disease □
   - Broken, missing or very worn teeth? __________________
   - Gums: Pink and healthy □ Other: __________________

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**July 2015**
Supply List for Intake Rooms

Performing an Intake Exam
A step by step slideshow

www.aspcapro.org

Performing Intake Exams in the REAL World...

What are your challenges and solutions?

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Performing Intake Exams in the REAL World...

Challenges and solutions

• We are understaffed, animals might wait days for intake exam to be done.

• Animals come in at all times of day, staff members have multiple duties - we cannot have staff dedicated just to performing intake exams.
Performing Intake Exams in the REAL World...

Challenges and solutions

• We are understaffed, animals might wait days for intake exam to be done.

• Animals come in at all times of day, staff members have multiple duties - we cannot have staff dedicated just to performing intake exams.

• We do not have a veterinarian on staff, how can animals receive the medical care that they need?

• What about animals that our animal control officers bring into shelter overnight or when shelter is closed?
Stephanie Janeczko, DVM, MS, DABVP, CAWA
Questions/Comments