



Super Size Me!



The 2004 documentary film "Super Size Me" warned of the potential adverse health effects from a diet consisting of only fast food. Did you know that our pets may

face similar issues? Veterinary nutritionists classify pet foods into two groups: popular diets and premium diets. In popular diets the basic nutritional components for healthy life are present (just the right amount of protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals to support adequate nutrition).

Popular diets are similar to "fast food" for pets; that is, the basic nutrients are present, but not in significant enough quantities to support optimal nutrition. These diets are the burgers and fries of the pet world! These popular foods are seen advertised on television and claim to be fortified with real vegetables and meat. Yet, like fast food burgers, the actual quantities of wholesome nutrients to be found in these foods are minimal. That piece of lettuce on a burger simply does not count as a serving of vegetables!

Premium diets, on the other hand, are the "Mediterranean diets" of the pet world (full of high quality nutrients which help pets truly thrive and lead long, healthy lives). These diets are not as well advertised as popular diets because the companies choose to invest their resources in researching and developing the best nutrient profiles for their products. These diets are often supplemented with nutrients not found in popular diets. For example, manufacturers may add ingredients such as omega fatty acids (shown to benefit pets with numerous medical disorders) or glucosamine and chondroitin (shown to benefit pets with arthritis). Premium pet foods are often much higher in calorie content (due to the higher quality nutrients found in these foods). As such, a much smaller quantity may be fed over the lifespan of companion animals compared to popular foods. Economic researchers have clearly demonstrated that the cost difference between the less expensive popular diets and premium diets is equivalent over the lifespan of a pet due to the higher calorie content of premium diets and the subsequent need to feed substantially less.

How can one know if a pet food is a premium diet? Premium diets are most often sold exclusively through pet supply stores or veterinarians. Although they are the more expensive diets, the premium price can indi-

cate an elevated quality of nutrition. Having a whole protein source specifically listed as chicken, lamb, salmon, etc. on the ingredient list as the first ingredient in the diet is a fairly reliable sign of a premium pet food. At Shoal Creek Animal Clinic, we consider Purina Pro Plan to be an excellent example of a premium diet and, as such, offer this product for our clients' pets. There are many high quality premium diets available from manufacturers such as Purina, Iams, and Hill's Pet Nutrition which can be characterized as premium diets. Whenever possible, choose to feed your pet a premium diet to help ensure a long and healthy life. Our staff can provide diet recommendations and ensure that your pet's diet is providing the quality nutrition needed by your companion.



Expanded hours!

To better serve the needs of clients, beginning July 1, 2009, Shoal Creek Animal Clinic extends Wednesday hours of operation from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Prescription Diets

In addition to the diets mentioned in the above article, there is another class of pet food known as prescription diets. While not legally considered medications requiring a doctor's prescription, prescription diets recommended by your veterinarian require routine monitoring of your pet. Prescription pet foods are intended to address specific medical concerns. These diets provide the benefit of helping to slow the progression of certain chronic diseases. Chronic kidney disease, liver disease, age-related brain changes, diabetes and osteoarthritis are but a few of the medical conditions for which alteration of specific nutrients has been of significant benefit to companion animals. In some cases these diets may actually reverse clinical disease. In the treatment of obesity, for example, dietary modification for a short period of time can effect resolution of the condition. Once a normal body condition has been obtained, the return to a non-prescription diet may be possible.

Many prescription diets are considered complete and balanced and may be fed for the life of the pet (depending upon the pet's medical condition). Others are designed to reverse a clinical disorder and are solely intended to be fed for a short period of time. If improperly monitored, some prescription diets have the potential to cause problems as specific nutrients may be restricted compared to commercial pet foods. Because it is important to assess how your pet progresses on

these diets, it is necessary for your veterinarian to perform follow-up lab work or routine physical examinations when a pet is placed on a prescription diet. Improper monitoring can lead to nutritional imbalances in pets not under the care of a veterinarian.

In order to best serve our patients' health needs and to safely fill requests for a "prescription" diet, the doctors at Shoal Creek Animal Clinic ask that your companion has visited us within the previous year for a wellness examination. At the time of your pet's wellness examination, recommendations for specific laboratory tests may be made to determine how your pet is progressing on the diet. In this way we can assess whether the selected diet is delivering the intended benefit for your companion's medical condition. Our staff will inform you if a wellness examination is needed in the near future for your pet prior to your next prescription diet refill.

I can't believe I ate the whole thing!



Remember the old Alka-Seltzer commercial in which the husband (named Ralph) couldn't get to sleep due to an over indulgent appetite? His wife kept saying, "Go to sleep, Ralph," but his gastrointestinal distress simply would not let him and he moaned repeatedly, "I can't believe

I ate the whole thing!" It won't surprise many pet owners to learn that our companions frequently share poor Ralph's complaint. Of all the different maladies for which veterinarians see dogs and cats, gastrointestinal distress (vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, inappetence) ranks among the most frequent.

A common cause of gastrointestinal problems in our animal companions is the consumption of too much food or of inappropriate food items. Although they may think of themselves as close kin to their wild cousins, domestic dogs and cats simply do not have the same intestinal fortitude. Unfortunately, the temptation to ingest small vermin, garbage, and, yes, even animal excrement runs strong in our pets! Veterinarians frequently refer to the subsequent gastrointestinal distress as "simple gastroenteritis" or "dietary indiscretion." Although

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

simple in explanation, this condition is not always simple to treat and can develop into life threatening illness. Our inability to supervise our pets 24/7 makes this condition difficult to prevent.

Another common cause of gastrointestinal distress is parasitism. In this part of the country, intestinal parasites account for a significant percentage of GI complaints. According to experts, the Southeast United States is the "parasite capitol of the nation." Hookworms, Whipworms, Roundworms, Coccidia, and Giardia are just a few examples of the organisms present in the environment that can adversely effect our pets. Animals need only walk in the yard and groom their feet to ingest the infective forms of parasites. Even strictly indoor pets have been known to acquire intestinal parasites from contact with dirt or debris we may track in on our shoes. As many intestinal parasites present a public health concern, regular fecal examinations by your veterinarian are recommended to screen for this common problem. In addition, the use of a protective medication such as certain heartworm preventives will control many of these parasites.

There are many other possible causes of gastrointestinal disease in dogs and cats. Conditions ranging from hairballs to foreign body obstructions, even cancer, can present very similar symptoms. Although parasitism and gastroenteritis are perhaps the most common causes of gastrointestinal distress, anytime your companion suffers from vomiting or diarrhea, it is recommended that they see the veterinarian as soon as possible.

Staff News

Kelli McCain is the newest member of our front office staff. Kelli comes to Shoal Creek Animal Clinic with a background in Human Resource Management. In addition, she is the owner of her own resume writing business. When not meeting the needs of clients, Kelli devotes her free time to her husband, Seth, and their Shih Tzu, Millie.

Our three new veterinary assistants are Laura Schoenig, Janet Hildreth, and Kellie Brown. **Janet Hildreth** describes herself as a total and complete animal lover. Her pets include two dogs, a cat, and two horses! Janet enjoys riding and training horses as well as instructing riding students. She and her husband, Jim, love living in the Athens community. **Laura Schoenig** was recently graduated from the University of South Carolina with a BS in Psychology. She plans to attend UGA's College of Veterinary Medicine. In her spare time, Laura enjoys all manner of outdoor activities; reading; and playing with her golden retriever mix, Lucky. She is looking forward to getting to know Athens and to cheering on the Bulldogs during football season...unless they're playing South Carolina! **Kellie Brown** is a pre-veterinary student at the University of Georgia. She loves animals of all sizes and has dreamed of being a veterinarian from her earliest years. When not working with animals she devotes her spare time to her other passions: leisure reading and cinema.



Shoal Creek Animal Clinic

2226 Barnett Shoals Road
Athens, GA 30605
706-369-0962
animalclinic@shoalcreek.com
<http://www.shoalcreek.com>

Pre-sort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Athens, GA
Permit No. 515

In This Issue: Premium Foods, Prescription Diets, Gastrointestinal Problems, Staff News, Clients' Corner

Visit our home page at <http://www.shoalcreek.com>

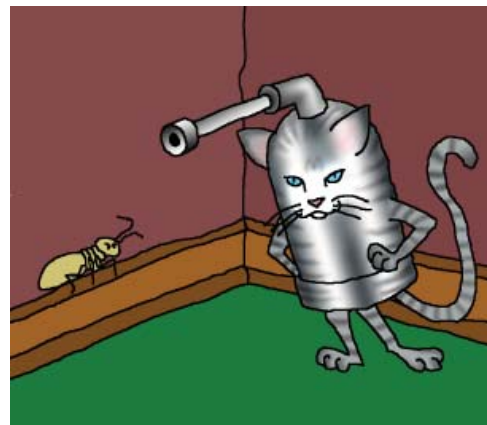
Clients' Corner

This new section of our newsletter is devoted to our clients and their pets. We plan to periodically share your stories about your animal companions. If you would like to make a submission for consideration in an upcoming edition of the Shoal Creek News, please send it to the e-mail or postal address above.

Our family adopted a rescue cat, Penelope, and her kitten daughter a couple of years ago. Penelope must have had a troubled kittenhood because she is insecure and very territorial. In fact, she "patrols" her territory, both inside and outside the house, daily. To our great distress, about a year ago, she started urinating periodically in the same spot on the oak floor in one corner of our dining room, despite having access to litter pans and to the outside. We assumed this was a manifestation of territorial marking behavior and it was driving us nuts! At one point we considered trying to find her a new home.

About ten days ago, I noticed that she had done it again. While I was on my knees cleaning up the puddle, I saw two dark colored slits in the dining room baseboard, about one inch long — upon closer inspection, I was appalled to see a brace of young termites emerging from

the slits! I grabbed a knife and probed the baseboard, only to discover that it was "punky," i.e., rotten. Off came the twelve foot baseboard, the shoe molding, and part of the oak floor. We had a



significant termite colony. A call to Lavender Pest Control brought quick service and mortality to the pesky termites. All that is left is the repair work.

We are now convinced that Penelope, being the territorially obsessive feline she is, heard and/or smelled the munching termites and was marking her space, and indirectly alerting us that we were being invaded!

-Woody and Ginger Beck