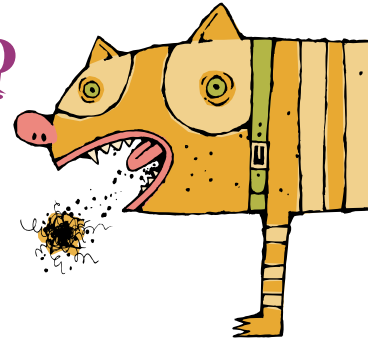


Dr. Kim's feline mews



Phone: 0400 756 331

Why does my Cat vomit fur or food?



One of the common causes is Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).

Diet and Nutrition are of increasing interest to cat owners (it has always totally fascinated cats!), and as we all move further from a "natural state", new problems appear. The following is a small segment on a huge topic.

There is no getting away from the fact that the perfect diet for cats is mice. Their predatory powers was what encouraged the Egyptians to accommodate them in their houses and grain silos thousands of years ago, and even today, about one-eighth of Australia's grain crops goes into rodents rather than the international markets! However, most modern town cats lead a rather more regal existence, and hunting is a recreation rather than a *raison d'être*, so humans must recreate a diet which fulfils all of a cat's dietary requirements.

First came the tinned foods, and cats trained their owners as to which were worthwhile purchasing (by refusing to consume lesser quality offerings). Feline nutritional needs are much more highly refined than dogs or humans, particularly in regard to protein quality and quantity – it is not metabolically worthwhile for a cat to eat a food of less than 20 percent protein (of "dry matter" - if you look at tinned food, it is 80 percent water, so the protein quoted is really quite high in the better quality products). The move to dried foods has resulted in production of high proteins levels to reflect this requirement also. Now comes the interesting part. In order to entertain owners and cats, colourings, flavourings and preservatives have been added to most tinned and dried foods, particularly the cheaper "supermarket" products. In fact, often the "flavour" is only sprayed on the outside of the biscuit, to minimise the use of the expensive parts of the formula.

Cats can cope with a lot of things, but it seems that they draw the line at "additives". Vets are seeing an increasing number of cats who vomit up their food (and some of the colourings in the dried food actually stains the carpet (so what is it doing to the cats' intestines?), and who only need to be converted to a high quality, (preferably preservative free) dried food to improve. Eliminating tinned food from the diet, and feeding 'real human grade' roo, chicken, turkey or pork (not beef or tuna) instead is part of the strategy. There is a product from New Zealand called ZiwiPeak - and as you'd expect, the tinned and dried varieties are both excellent for cats, and come in three flavours even! The dried 'jerky' is a bit of a texture shock for most adult cats and they are reluctant to eat it. However, starting your young cat out on it is an excellent choice.

Back to IBD: the cats often start out by vomiting more furballs than usual, then start vomiting food. Some then progress to the near-cancerous stage of IBD, and some of those go on to develop cancerous (usually lymphoma) lesions in the bowel. Pretty serious stuff. Food trials are the main diagnostic tool,

and usually starts with human grade 'roo meat and Nutro kitten (chicken) - made in Australia with fewer preservatives. However, most cats with IBD will end up on the specialist food products - Hills Prescription Z/D or Royal Canin Hypoallergenic diet. They are readily accepted by most cats (and those with IBD tend to be fussy because of the nausea created by the condition). Nutrience and Hills Science diet (particularly sensitive stomach variety) are all high quality diets, with very small amounts of preservative, so are fine except for the really sensitive cat (who has usually been sensitised by eating the highly coloured varieties of food rather than starting and staying on a premium diet).

The hallmarks of IBD are frequent vomiting (weekly or more) with weight loss. There are other conditions which cause similar symptoms, so any loss of weight or increased frequency of vomiting (more than once every week or two) needs to be checked out thoroughly. Cats can vomit on command - if they feel nauseous within three hours of eating something, they can empty their stomach, and will often reject that food next time as being the source of the nausea. This 'food aversion' is one of the problems that cause the chronically nauseous cat to become 'finicky' - they blame the food when most likely the problem is an underlying illness such as kidney problems or, in fact, IBD.

So, cats are hypercarnivores and their digestive system is quite streamlined. They cannot taste sugar, but they can taste water! The ideal diet is a mouse, but even rabbit alone, in confined cats, was not enough. <http://www.felineinstincts.com/order-Now/Taurinedeficiencyinrabbit.html> although now there is evidence that rabbit itself is deficient in taurine, so was maybe just a poor choice for the research. We should all be eating Omega-3's - found in fish oil and some seeds. There are new diets for joint diseases (VERY high in Omega-3) as well as the hypoallergenic and diets for 'kidney cats. Indeed, as cats have known all along - you are (as healthy as) what you eat! Make mine a mouse!

Foods to avoid: any tinned (except ZiwiPeak) or sachet / pouch foods, supermarket Pet Mince (especially), any variety of beef or milk (including Cat Milk), some fish especially tuna. 70 percent of cats are fine eating even the dried food, but 30 percent are not and when they vomit on the carpet, they come to see Dr Kim.

OK to eat: turkey, kangaroo (human grade), chicken (usually, but not minced), pork, lamb (usually).