



## Well, have we?

The question on everyone's lips lately is "Have we seen your cat lately?" It's true, feline patients are few and far between. Here's something you may not know: cats are more popular pets than dogs. According to studies, there are nearly 10 million more pet cats than dogs in the United States. However, hospitals nationwide are seeing more canine patients than their feline counterparts. Why is that?

- Cats are naturally healthier than dogs and are more problem free.

**[FALSE]**

This is not true. Got you on that one, didn't we? It's a common misconception that cats are just "naturally healthy". Cats develop diseases and have just as many health concerns as dogs do. The truth: Cats are very good liars. They hide their symptoms very well, and your cat may be harboring an illness right under your watchful eye. This is why having your cat examined at least yearly by their veterinarian.

- Feline health problems come from outside and don't affect indoor cats.

**[FALSE]**

Not true again! Indoor cats don't have super powers. They are just as likely to fall ill as an outdoor cat. While being indoors may keep your kitty safe from many dangers, the indoor status doesn't affect their healthcare. If you have indoor and outdoor cats that mingle, you could be introducing disease. Have them all checked out! Just because they stay inside doesn't mean you have to be a stranger to your veterinarian!

You love your cat and you want to make sure they stay healthy. Having them seen by a veterinarian is just another way you can keep that promise.

- Cats will display visible signs of illness like dogs do.

**[FALSE]**

Wrong again! Remember that first myth? Cats are good at hiding their illnesses. They're prey to many animals and in the wild if they show signs of weakness, they've made themselves very vulnerable. Cats that are injured will more than likely keep on moving as if nothing was wrong. Some illnesses hide within your cat's body and have no physical symptoms—your veterinarian can make sure your cat is healthy by performing a physical exam and even by running labs. As a caretaker to your pets, you're responsible for making sure they stay healthy.

There are many misconceptions about cats. Quality healthcare isn't one of them. Now you know that cats are just as prone to disease as dogs and you know that cats don't show visible signs of illness like dogs do. So, what can you do as their owner? Yes, bring them to the veterinarian! Owners make appointments for their dog's annual examination and vaccinations every day—do the same for your cat. Cats need to be examined just like dogs. The physical exam is the most important part of the annual; vaccinations are just a perk. The veterinarian is a skilled physician that will be able to look at every part of your pet and ensure they are as healthy as you think they are. Cats that routinely go outside should be tested for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). They should also be vaccinated for Feline Leukemia. These viruses often don't have symptoms until it's too late. A simple 10 minute blood test will let you know.

The biggest thing a pet owner can do is pay attention to their pets. We all say we do, but do we really? Are we watching how much they're eating and drinking? Do we monitor their litter box activity? Do we notice when they aren't as sociable? The answer to most of these questions is no. A decrease in appetite or thirst can be a sign that your cat is ill even if they are behaving normally. Again, cats hide their symptoms very well. Cats often have hairballs; but if your cat is vomiting more than usual be sure to have them looked at. Little changes in behavior are big clues if something is wrong. Cats that are usually in your face may become reclusive, or vice versa. **Be Aware.**



The moral of the story? Don't assume your pets are healthy. They can't talk to us and they often hide their illnesses. Pay attention to changes in your pet's lifestyle as these can be signs of serious disease. Younger cats are just as likely to get ill as an older cat, so don't do them a favor by not bringing them in because "they hate it". Many clinics, like ours, are making their practice more feline friendly by adding "cat only" areas to the waiting room and having exam rooms strictly for cats. You can also make it easier on your cat by bringing them more often. They will adapt and realize the animal hospital isn't the end of the line. We love animals, cats and dogs alike, and we want to make sure we do everything we can to ensure the livelihood of your best friend. You, as an owner, can do the same. Don't sit back and watch your cat walk on by; get involved! They will certainly thank you.

Interested in more information about the "Have we seen your cat lately" campaign? Ask the Dutch Fork Animal Hospital staff the next time you visit us.