

My dog isn't eating properly

Overview

Has your dog stopped eating? Or perhaps they are eating a bit less than usual? Appetites do vary between dogs but if your dog's eating habits have changed it's often a sign of a problem.

There are many things that can cause a reduced appetite in a dog and it's very important to get them checked out by a vet if their eating habits change.

Description of symptom

Most of us keep a close eye on how much our dog is eating so we will pick up on a reduced appetite very quickly. However, if you have more than one dog and they eat together, it can be difficult to tell if one of them isn't eating properly. Other signs to look out for include:

- Weight loss
- Low energy (lethargy)
- A painful mouth (struggling to eat or eating on one side of their face)
- Jaundice (where the skin / whites of the eyes turn yellow)
- Dribbling more than usual
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Why isn't my dog eating properly?

There are many reasons why a dog might stop eating, including:

Tooth and gum disease

Tooth and gum disease (such as tartar, loose or broken teeth, sore gums and abscesses) can cause enough pain to stop your dog eating.

Pain

Your dog may stop eating if they are hurting somewhere, it may not be obvious what is hurting them and you may only notice vague symptoms such as being grumpy or quiet.

Diet changes

Some fussy dogs may refuse to eat because they don't like their food. Frequent diet changes or feeding human foods can upset your dog's stomach. Read our guide on how to safely change your dog's diet.

Stress

Any stressful changes concerning housing or family can cause a dog to stop eating.

Infections and high temperature

Any infection that causes a high temperature is likely put a dog off its food.

Lung or heart disease

Dogs may find it difficult to eat if they are struggling to breathe because of heart disease or lung disease.

Liver or kidney disease

Liver disease and kidney disease can both cause loss of appetite by making a dog feel sick.

Hormonal diseases

Hormone problems such as hypothyroidism can affect appetite.

Gut problems

Gut problems such as colitis, gastritis or IBS will often cause a reduced appetite. However, other symptoms such as diarrhoea or vomiting will come before a reduced appetite.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if you notice your dog's eating habits change. It is important that you see a vet very quickly if your dog hasn't eaten anything for more than 24 hours.

You know your dog best. If you still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

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