



Urinary Bladder Maintenance (Expressing The Bladder)

Spinal cord disease can be associated with temporary or permanent inability to empty the urinary bladder. The result is a very full, over-stretched and uncomfortable bladder that is at risk for bacterial infection. Bladder management should improve comfort and reduce the chances of damage or infection of the bladder and kidney.

Bladder management involves frequent trips to places where your dog or cat typically urinates – the smell and a safe environment may allow them to relax and eliminate. Medication can also be used that will allow the urinary sphincter to relax (valium, phenoxybenzamine) or the bladder to contract (bethanechol). Lastly, a technique called manual bladder expression can be used to squeeze urine from your pet's bladder. This technique is described below:

Bladder location: If you bend over such that your torso is perpendicular to your hips or parallel to the ground and think about where your bladder is positioned, this will be the same for a dog or cat. The bladder will be tucked up in the top and back of the abdomen right in front of the pelvis or if completely full it may be farther forward along the body wall.

Steps to bladder expression:

1. With your pet lying on its side, place hands in a prayer-like fashion over the area where you imagine the bladder is located. If your pet is strong enough to support its weight then this procedure can be done while standing. You may find this procedure works better for you if your hands are facing toward the front of the animal as opposed to the rear.
2. Slowly apply equal and progressively increasing pressure to body wall and by extension the urinary bladder. Slow steady and progressive pressure is the key. This is a skill that your pet likely requires so try to be patient, keep trying and **DO NOT BECOME DISCOURAGED.**

The spinal cord can heal and hopefully your pet will regain the ability to urinate. If, while urinating without assistance, your pet is developing a stream of urine then it is likely this procedure is no longer necessary. If they are dribbling urine or not developing a good stream of urine in a 12 hour period, then likely they still need manual bladder expression.

If your pet is painful during this process or the urine is a dark color, blood colored or smells foul then please seek veterinary care.

