Grumbly tummies and squirty bottoms – what to do with a the case of gastro?

In the last couple of months there have been a number of mini-outbreaks of gastro doing the rounds of the Darlo area, with a number of our canine patients feeling a little worse for wear in the gut department.

Gut upsets presenting as diarrhoea with or without vomiting can be caused by a vast array of different things, but here are a few common things we tend to find triggering them

- Dietary "Indiscretions" – eating something they usually don't or shouldn't eat. Classic example is scavenging food waste from the street (old kebabs or chicken bones, sometimes even poo, gross!)
- Sudden change in diet – moving onto a new brand of food too quickly, or feeding table scraps or sneaky treats that they are not used to.
- Infectious diseases – gut worms, other gut parasites, viruses and bacterial infections can be picked up from a number of sources and cause illness
- Intolerances to particular foods (more commonly to a particular source of animal protein, and less commonly other sources ie grains/ carbs)

What to do to try and avoid these things?

- If your pooch has a tendency to scavenge, keeping a close watch on them on walks or on lead in high risk zones to avoid them eating undesirable (however delicious) items from the street.
- Try to be prepared through the holiday period with enough food to last without having to buy that last minute "emergency bag" after running out. Keeping to the same high quality nutrition (eg vet formulated Hill's or Royal Canin brands) without changing brands is very helpful to keep guts happy.
- If changing food, make a slow gentle transition in feeding the new kibble by incremental amounts (roughly 10 – 15% replacing old with new kibble each day over 7 to 10 days to allow the digestive system to get used to it)
- Avoid bones of any kind – feeding bones can increase chances of gut upsets and even more serious complications of gut obstructions / blockages and constipation – they are safer ways to help your pet chew and help clean the teeth
- Avoid raw meat – raw meat, especially chicken carries an increased risk of bacterial and parasitic gut infections. Cooking the meat reduces the risk of this, but remember to never feed cooked bones.
- Christmas time can seem like the perfect opportunity to spoil our pets with delicious treats, but be mindful that those sneaky snags from the barby or other rich, fatty treats can wreak havoc with the guts and can even induce a serious condition known

as pancreatitis! Avoiding any unknown treats, especially if rich or fatty is the safest bet.

- Be sure to never feed anything containing toxic foodstuffs to dogs; chocolate, raisins, grapes, onions and garlic being major culprits which can cause serious illness. For cat owners, make sure no lily flowers are accessible as these are extremely toxic to the kidneys if ingested.
- Ensure parasite prevention is kept up to date – gut worming tablets given monthly or 3 monthly depending on the product used (and don't forget about those fleas, ticks and heartworm too!)

If your pet does come down with a mild, simple case of diarrhoea, with or without vomiting, it may resolve itself fairly quickly by feeding very bland, easily digestible diet (such as poached chicken and rice or Hill's I/D prescription food) for a few days.

However, if the symptoms are more severe, ie lethargic and no energy, frequently vomiting, straining or very uncomfortable pooing, traces of blood in the stool, not wanting to eat or drink) then it is advisable to have them checked out immediately by us at the vets, as they may need fluid replacement if dehydrating, appropriate testing to identify what may be causing the disease, and medication as needed relieve symptoms and prevent it from worsening.

So best of luck with keeping those festive gut grumbles away and have a lovely Yule tide folks!

Dr Cara