Have you ever wondered why your pets eats grass?

We have all seen our dogs go to the park and munch down on some grass. There are many opinions on why this occurs but unfortunately there are no clear studies as to why this occurs:

1. Just for fun, because it's something to do and the dogs like to chew. Generally, the volumes consumed are not massive and rarely will lead to any gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting or diarrhoea. Be careful that your dog does not graze on fertilized or insecticide sprayed grass as these may be toxic. Also be mindful that freshly cut grass and some weeds may be allergenic to some pets and cause an itchy muzzle or other skin inflammation or itchiness.
2. Dietary deficiency. Another theory is that pets do this to balance out the fiber in their diet. An anecdote tells of a poodle that ate grass and vomited weekly for years. Once changed to a good quality, premium pet food with a balance of fibers and protein, this habit stopped. If you are concerned about your pet's diet, please discuss this with one of our vets.
3. Self-medicating. Some people believe that pets do this to encourage vomiting and gut purging. Dogs and cats may consume grass to assist in the vomiting of fur balls and bone fragments that are sitting in the stomach. If this be the case, you should see fur or bone fragments in the vomit. Try grooming your pets more frequently – especially at the beginning of summer. In cats wipe them over with a damp face towel to help pick up any loose fur. Use of a Furminator brand brush and flea comb can also be helpful, especially for cats. Bones are NOT recommended, but if you must feed them, ensure they are raw, as cooked bones are not digestible. This type of grass eating should not be a regular thing and you should always be mindful of any sudden changes in behaviour as these may signify disease or illness and a veterinary checkup is recommended.
4. Excessive gastric acid, especially if it is a long time between meals. Often seen with dogs that have a very early dinner and then a late breakfast. They may eat grass very early in the morning and have a bile – grass vomit. Try splitting dinner into two parts. 75% at dinner time and 25% as a late night super. If this doesn't settle things, then a veterinary checkup is recommended
5. Gastrointestinal or other systemic disease. Some pets will have inflammatory bowel disease, partial intestinal obstructions, cancer, kidney or liver disease that cause nausea, colic signs, slowed gastric emptying amongst other signs. Blood test and a check and ocassionally further abdominal imaging (xrays, ultrasound, endoscopy) may be required.

As you can see, the age-old question has many answers and vary between the harmless and benign to something much more serious. If in doubt, chat with your vet to see what the next step could be.

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