

Early Recognition of Illness in Small Animals: The Weekly Home Check-Up

Small animals are amongst the most popular pets. Because they are prey animals in the wild and therefore run from danger, it is their nature to hide symptoms of illness as long as possible. In order to detect signs of disease early, you can carry out a regular check up of your animals at home with little effort, but a large effect, enabling you to consult a veterinarian in time if you are in doubt.

- Weigh your pet at least once a week (at about the same time) on a (electronic) kitchen scale- a healthy animal shows minimal weight fluctuations; document any constant weight loss and consult a veterinarian promptly
- Observe the feed intake of your pet: e.g. are soft things selected? Are there any difficulties in chewing hard feed? Does feed fall back out of the mouth? Does your pet drool while eating? (These symptoms may indicate a dental disease)
- How do the faeces and urine appear? Does your animal show signs of pain while defecating? Does your animal strain while urinating or defecating, or is there only often a very small amount of urine? Do you often hear loud stomach noises?

Pay attention to the colour, shape, consistency, smell of (a putrid smell from faeces indicates a severe gastrointestinal problem), and additions (e.g. mucus, blood, urinary stones) to faeces and urine

- Observe the behaviour of your pet: it is remarkably quiet and shows an increased need to withdraw?
- Has the ranking within a group changed? (Especially with, sick animals are often „bullied“)
- How is the texture of the fur? A healthy animal has a shiny, smooth and thick coat. Have you noticed changes in grooming behaviour? Does your animal shake their ears more than usual? (Noticeably vigorous cleaning can indicate itching, and sick animals often change their grooming behaviours)
- Check your pet thoroughly: are the orifices clean? Can you feel swellings on the body? Watch out for claws and footpads! (Pets often suffer from inflammation of the footpad)

