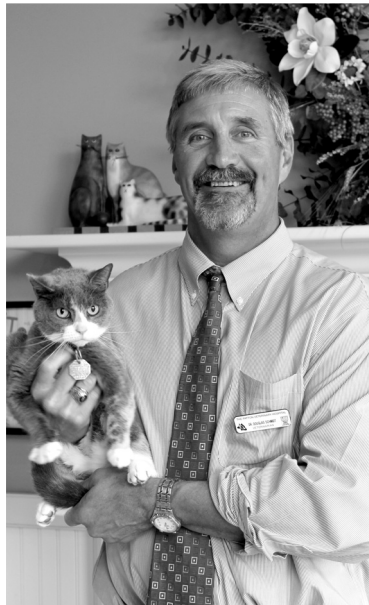


# ASK OUR VET, DR. SCHMIDT



## *Feline Asthma*

Feline asthma or allergic bronchitis is a fairly common condition in cats causing coughing, wheezing and, in some cases, more severe respiratory distress. Similar to humans, inflammation and constriction of the airways occurs making breathing more difficult for the cat. Asthma typically occurs in young adult or middle-aged cats. Allergy to airborne particles like cigarette or fireplace smoke, perfume or air fresheners, hairspray, pollens and other allergens may cause an asthma attack. Symptoms may be mild, causing a cough or wheezing while breathing, or severe, with the cat in respiratory distress, open-mouthed breathing with sides heaving. Severe respiratory distress may be fatal if the cat cannot get enough oxygen.

Diagnosis is made by history, physical examination of the cat, especially hearing wheezing when listening to the lungs and, sometimes, by x-rays of the chest, though changes to the lungs may not be present early in the course of disease. Cats with suspected asthma may also be tested for other illnesses such as feline heartworm disease, pneumonia or lungworms.

If the patient is in severe respiratory distress when presented to the veterinarian, treatment may involve oxygen therapy and short-acting injectable drugs like corticosteroids and drugs to dilate the airways. If

the cat is difficult to medicate, a type of inhaler may be used. A mask fits over the cat's face and the inhaled medication is puffed into the chamber so the cat can breathe it into his lungs.

Most cats can be managed with medications and have a good prognosis, though severe asthma attacks can occur at any time and immediate help must be sought if the cat is having difficulty breathing and does not respond to pills or an inhaler. Symptoms can also be improved by reducing exposure to inhaled irritants.



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