

## DEADLY HAIRBALLS!!

(used with permission)

This is an article on what I have learned about “hairballs” in poms. I know most of you will say – if the mother is trimmed correctly, there should be no problem. I sincerely hope and pray that what you will read will make everyone more diligent in making sure their puppies are treated at the first thought of a problem.

A few years ago, a friend of ours worked at the Ridgetown College Vet lab alongside a licensed veterinarian. Like myself, our friend was a founding member of our agility group, so we were in contact weekly, sometimes more often. It was common knowledge we have poms, and the conversation one afternoon turned to a case that had come to the lab for diagnosis. A whole litter of poms had died, from a kennel in the area with no diagnosis for the deaths. Autopsies were requested to find out the cause. To my utter disbelief, my friend told of the causes – in every puppy (they were between 4-8 weeks old – it was a few years ago and I don’t remember the exact age) the intestines were totally impacted with hair that had become like concrete.

Nothing could get through. Hairballs killed these puppies!

This conversation was very fresh in my mind, when our Annie was about 6 weeks old and began that dry hacking, with little or nothing coming up. Still eating a bit, bowel movements were not as consistent as they had been up to this point. Her mom had a c-section, so tummy completely shaved off – and I had trimmed her right up – to about an inch or so all over. And the whelping box was kept brushed out and bedding changed daily. I sent hubby to our vet’s office, advising him to make sure to tell the vet I thought it was hairballs causing the problem and what could I do about it. The vet thought I had finally lost it – hairballs – couldn’t be. But he humoured me and gave my husband a tube of the feline hairball remedy that they use. Well, within hours of giving her an inch or so of the paste, she expelled a hairball approximately 2-3 inches in length. This hairball could not be broken apart, I could not cut it with a plastic knife (I know this sounds really silly but I was very curious as to the strength of these things). So now our vet is very aware of the danger of hairballs.

I had mentioned this to Bev Carter a year or so ago, but just recently one of her puppies (a very tiny one) was coughing, throwing up, and had diarrhea. I suggested she check out the possibility of hairballs. Her daughter took puppy to the vet, but the vet was convinced hairballs were not the problem. Then a few days later, puppy was worse, Bev took him in, he was critical by this time and she almost lost him. Bev demanded the vet treat it as a blockage this time. The vet used a barium treatment, in order that the x-rays would show what was causing the problem. Nothing showed in the stomach or intestines. He was to call Bev back as soon as he had completed the colon x-rays. A large blockage showed on the x-ray – just outside the colon where it joins the intestine. Bev advised the vet to do what was necessary, to open the puppy up if required. The vet advised they would use the Laxatone to begin with to see if that would work the blockage loose. It was a huge hairball. Bev is convinced this puppy would not have survived the night without treatment.

Hairballs are deadly, and after hearing about the litter that was lost, and our Annie, and now Bev’s little Risky, I have no doubt that there are many puppies lost to this danger, deaths that have undetermined causes. PLEASE, please, if your puppies (or older dogs for that matter) begin unexplained coughing, with no apparent reason, abnormal bowel movements, it is worth checking out.

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But, fill your vet in on some of these cases, they have all happened. The veterinarian who conducted the autopsies on the puppies that died gave me her permission to use the case in this article. She had sent a very small article regarding this case and it was published in either the Pom Review or the Pom Reader (she was unsure which it was) a few years ago so some of you may have read about it at that time.

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This Hairball was coughed up by one of our Poms. It was solid hair and very difficult to cut! We now give them all a regular dose of Laxapet. Sandy.

