



# National Newsletter

## Chow Chow Fanciers

### of Canada



February 2001 - March 2001

There are some changes on the horizon for our National Club. The CKC has informed us of a new policy that requires our club to have four Regional Directors in addition to our current Executive members. These four Directors will represent four different regions in Canada. According to the CKC, the regions have been defined as: BC, Prairie Provinces (AB, SK & MB), Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Provinces (NS, NFD, PEI & NB) and the Territories (Yukon, NWT & NU). Our membership currently does not have any members in Quebec or the Territories.

The National Executive has formed a nominating committee for this special situation. The Nominating Committee's nominees for Regional Directors are:

Candice Jensen - BC  
 Judy Erickson - Prairie Prov.  
 Christine Farnell - ON  
 Jacque Swim - Atlantic Prov.

If CCFC members would like to see other individuals nominated in their region, please send these nominations (via email, fax, or Canada Post) to Suzanne Staines so that they are received on or before

March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Voting will occur sometime in April 2001. Please note: Regional Director positions will be voted on only by the members living within that region.

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Hi All, just a thought  
 from Kitty...

I am sitting at my table, looking out my window, watching my puppies play. I have a 6 month old male and a 4 month old female and it is fascinating to watch the interplay. He, of course, is much larger and can roll her around pretty easily. She does not realize this and is the dominate one at all times as she leaps up and grabs him by his ruff and seems to make him fall over. It is so interesting to note how gentle he can be. As they romp and play I try and figure out what they are learning, it is very seldom that either of them ever gives a yelp of pain. Has someone, maybe their mom, told them that they have to be good kids? Is this where good temperament is learned?

When they come in the house their Grandpa, who is eleven and a little crotchety, greets

them with a sniff and a kiss. They both greet him with respect and love and all of a sudden they are both on an equal footing, no dominance here, Grandpa is definitely Boss. One little growl and they both back off as if to say OK Gramps we didn't mean to bother you. Both puppies tend to want to wash Grandpa's ears and eyes and he usually just lets them. When they get carried away he just gives them the smallest grrr and they quickly behave themselves. Wish my kids had been so obedient.

Over the years I have usually kept my dogs apart, maybe let a male and female run together, but now I am wondering if it is better to bring in a puppy and trust the adult dogs to partially train them for me. I very seldom go out and leave adult dogs together but am finding that a lot of my chows are very social and like the company of another dog.

What do you think? Should or would you leave all your dogs together? How do you go about creating good temperament? Send your ideas and comments to Suzanne. She is always looking for items of interest for our Newsletter.

## Owner Documentation of Coprophagia in the Canine

Erik Hofmeister; Melinda Cumming, DVM PhD; Cheryl Dhein, DVM, MS, DACVIM

### Overview

Coprophagia is defined as the consumption of feces by an animal and is a common complaint of owners to their veterinarians.

Since there has been little research done on this particular behavior, the veterinarian is usually poorly equipped to give a recommendation to the owner. This study is intended to provide epidemiological information about the incidence of the behavior in the canine population, the age of onset, age of disappearance, and various other pieces of information crucial to form a basis from which to study this very important behavior.

### Proposed Causes

Coprophagia may result due to various medical problems. Primary among them are exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, pancreatitis, intestinal infections, malabsorptive syndromes, and over-feeding (especially high fat content diets). However, with the majority of these conditions, many other signs beside the coprophagia will be prominent, particularly diarrhea. Coprophagia is usually only a

small aspect of these medical conditions.

There have been a variety of behavioral theories put forth as to why canines engage in coprophagia. It is important at this time to define different kinds of coprophagia.

Autocoprophagia deals with an animal eating its own feces. Intraspecific coprophagia deals with an animal eating feces from another animal within its own species. Interspecific coprophagia deals with an animal eating feces from another species (dog eating cat, deer, rabbit, etc feces). Several behavioral explanations of coprophagia are discussed below.

**Attention-seeking behavior:** When the dog engages in coprophagia, their owner tends to reprimand them and, therefore, pay attention to the animal. This may be a sequellae to a medical condition which brought about the coprophagia initially and, now that the medical condition has cleared, the animal continues to engage in coprophagia in order to get attention from the owner. This is unlikely in well-treated animals, however, because they will likely get all the attention they need without having to draw negative attention to themselves. This is being examined in our study.

**Allelomimetic behavior:** The

dog observes the owner picking up the feces and learns from them to do so as well.

**Learned behavior:** The dog observes other dogs engaging in coprophagia and mimics their activity, thus 'learning' it from other dogs within the household or those living nearby. This begs the question as to what started the first dog to engage in coprophagia. This is being examined in our study.

**Maternal behavior:** A bitch with puppies will often engage in coprophagia, and this behavior is normal. There are many theories as to why the bitch does this, including keeping the den clean and preventing the scent of the feces from attracting predators. This is being examined in our study.

**Dominance behavior:** There have been reports of a submissive dog consuming the feces of one or more dominant dogs in the same household. There are other examples in nature where the submissive members of a group participate in apparently bizarre behaviors. This is being examined in our study.

**Reinforcement:** Something about eating the feces itself reinforces the behavior. Things such as taste may be a factor in this. It's simply appealing to the dog to eat the feces, so it does so. This

is the likely mechanism in interspecific coprophagia such as eating cat feces.

Feeding behavior: Many people feed their dogs only once per day. Some postulate that dogs naturally want to have multiple meals throughout the day, hence they use coprophagia to supplement their feeding schedule and fulfill this need. This is being examined in our study.

### Treatment Options

These treatments are all the opinions of the authors of this study. We make no claims about the efficacy of these treatments, nor do we endorse using any specific products herein. This is provided merely to inform interested individuals of what has been used in the past, and the authors' opinions of these treatments. Our study will provide more objective data regarding the efficacy of some of these treatments.

Meat tenderizer: Some people theorize that adding various enzymes to the diet of a coprophagic animal may help. The suspicion is that these enzymes break down more of the nutrients in a dog's diet so that it gets adequate nutrition and need not ingest its feces to get a proper influx of nutrients. There are some reports of this treatment working.

Forbid (TM)(R): This is a powder supplement added to a dog's food. It is thought that this makes the feces taste bad for a coprophagic dog. Note that this must be applied to the food of the dog whose feces is being eaten. It is by veterinary prescription only. The efficacy has not been proved to the satisfaction of the authors. Note also that this can only be given to dogs, so will only be effective with autocoprophagia or intraspecific coprophagia.

Deter (TM)(R): This is a pill given to a dog with its food. Like Forbid, Deter is suspected to make the feces distasteful. It is not veterinary prescribed, but the same issues exist as with Forbid.

Bad taste on feces: This is perhaps the most common treatment for coprophagia. Owners are advised to put something like hot sauce on or in their dogs' feces. The theory is that the dog will consume the treated feces and will have an aversive response to it (due to bad taste) and will eventually cease the behavior. For this behavior to be effective, it must be used 100% of the time. Every feces must have hot sauce or other noxious tasting element on it or else the dog will not associate the bad taste with eating the feces. It is the opinion of the authors that the owner

should simply pick up the feces instead. Lack of access to feces is the most effective treatment option (described below). Some dogs will stop engaging in coprophagia if the cycle is broken by picking up feces, so that treatment is much easier, much simpler, and more effective means of controlling coprophagia.

Scolding/Punishment: This is a common method of trying to have an animal stop a behavior. Barking is a good example- owners think if they scold their pet for barking, it will cease to bark. Punishment almost never works as well as reinforcement, however, and should only be used as a last resort. This may actually lead to more coprophagia as the dog learns that it gets attention (being scolded) if it eats its feces.

Ignoring: This is often used by owners because they have figured out that their dogs may want attention from eating the feces, so they ignore the dog when it's engaging in coprophagia. This is likely better than scolding and punishment, but probably not as effective as reinforcing a good behavior (such as coming when called).

Pickup: This is a treatment strategy by preventing access to the feces by the animal. In extreme cases of coprophagia, a muzzle may

have to be administered when the dog is let outside to prevent it from eating the feces.

Usually simply picking up shortly after the dog and preventing the dog from eating feces during walks is sufficient.

Often this may break the cycle of behavior as described above under scolding/punishment.

Other chemicals: There are no less than several dozen purported chemical treatments for coprophagia, including homeopathic remedies. Of course, only anecdotal information is available about these compounds. Some supplements which have been suggested include pumpkin seeds, breath mints, papaya, anise seed, and pineapple. If you're aware of a compound which worked, please email Erik and he will hopefully add a comprehensive list and discussion of rare or exotic remedies.

Muzzle: If the dog engages in this behavior when unattended, or consumes the feces directly when it comes out, a muzzle may be a practical solution to the problem. If it is well tolerated and the dog does not have to have it on for extended periods of time, this may be one of the more practical ways to deal with a dog who is coprophagic and unsupervisable.

Wait: Anecdotally, this seems to be a behavior most often occurring in younger dogs. Many owners report that their dog eventually grows out of it. While not exactly treatment, it is possible that the dog will stop being coprophagic as it ages.

Positive Reinforcement: This is the process of reinforcing another behavior instead of the coprophagia. When the dog is about to begin eating feces, the owner can use any variety of commands. "Leave it", "come", "sit", etc. can all be used. The idea here is to distract the dog long enough to allow the owner to pick the feces up and make the dog forget about the coprophagia behavior.

Combination: It is almost impossible to recommend a single best treatment for coprophagia for all dogs. Because the mechanism and reasons why dogs engage in this behavior are unknown, it is not known which behavior modification therapies will be most effective. It is the opinion of this author that a combination of reinforcing desired behaviors and picking up feces is the best combination for treatment of coprophagia.

#### Health Implications

Most of the time, coprophagia is merely a habit which is disgusting to owners but causes no real problems for the dog who is eating it. There are some important

exceptions to this, however. The most critical is the possibility of ingesting internal parasites. Usually this will happen if your dog eats the feces of unfamiliar, infested dogs or the feces of wild life (such as deer). If you keep your animals properly dewormed, the dog eating the feces of these animals is usually not at risk for internal parasites. However, the possibility of picking up a parasite from a strange animal (especially wild life) is very real, and the dog should be prevented from eating such feces as much as possible.

In addition to internal parasites, organisms such as *Toxoplasma gondii* is transmitted in some cat feces. This can cause a dog a variety of problems, including CNS and muscle damage. Try to keep the dog away from cat feces as much as possible because of this.

It's also possible that the feces, if left to sit too long, can become infested with fly larvae, foreign bacteria, fungus, etc. It is best to make sure your dog avoids these sources of disease as much as possible. Be sure to keep your dog away from strange feces when on a walk and clean up any old feces in your yard as soon as possible.

Some important canine viral diseases can also be transmitted by the fecal-oral route and infection could result from coprophagia of infected dogs'

feces. Hepatitis and canine parvovirus are two important diseases which can be transmitted in this manner. Fortunately, vaccinated dogs are at little risk.

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This is an email from a web based Chow Chow discussion list. Reprinted with permission and slight modification (grammar) by **Carmen Jane Booth, D.V.M.**  
February 8, 2001.

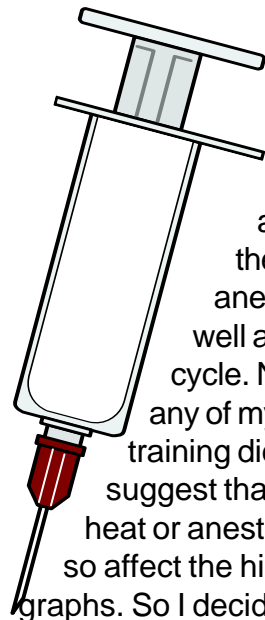
What follows is my personal experience with my latest chow that turned two in October. I thought that my experience would be useful to others.

As a veterinarian, over the years, I have taken numerous OFA radiographs of dogs both with and without anesthesia. Where possible, I do not use anesthesia or tranquilization. In the profession, more anesthesia or tranquilization is being used to try and minimize the radiation exposure to the humans taking the radiographs.

When my puppy was 14 months old, she was barely out of heat and I took her to a clinic where I can have radiographs taken on my pets. I will probably eventually do relief work there. Since they didn't know me at the time and we wanted the best positioning for the preliminary radiographs (no movement), I

allowed my dog to be anesthetized with me monitoring the anesthesia. It was quick acting sedation and then gas anesthesia (aerane (isoflurane)) that could be quickly stopped. They got one set of films with slight rotation and I checked her body temperature. It was too high not dangerous but elevated from normal. We stopped the anesthesia. We put a ice pack on her and she recovered just fine. Her temperature never went to the dangerous level, but I was not going to risk her health for radiographs. I was not happy about the films, the rotation was slight, but even so, I did not think the hips would rate a good or excellent.

This is where experience rather than education can help. My friend, who bred the dog, said that we should wait until she was 2 and retake them without anesthesia and well after heat cycle. Nowhere in any of my veterinary training did anyone suggest that being in heat or anesthesia could so affect the hip radiographs. So I decided to trust my friend. Now here's the part where people should take note.



Most of our dogs are not trained to be comfortable when they are having radiographs taken, mine included. I worked with my girl for the ten intervening months so that she would be comfortable up on the grooming table on her side and back without moving. We do grooming and her nails all the time, but this was different. I would rub her tummy and say, "Stay". We did this a few times every week.

I waited until she had been out of heat for over a month and after she turned 2, we went back to the clinic. This time I held her front and the clinic veterinarian held her rear legs. He was very skeptical that she would stay and not squirm without tranquilization etc. Well, the first films were a tad rotated so we had to re-take them. This clinic has a giant vinyl covered foam V that the dogs can be put in on their back that is comfy. Once she was on her back, I just kept rubbing her tummy while saying, "Good Girl". She didn't move at all. She trusts me and is a wonderful chow. While we were waiting for the first films to be developed, the tech said, "Is she even awake?". My girl had her eyes closed and was very relaxed with mom rubbing her tummy. The second films look great and I am waiting to hear from OFA.

When a dog is in heat I think that the hormones must make the joints more lax. I know

that under anesthesia they are not as tight as normal. I will never anesthetize any of my current or future dogs for OFA films, and will work with them so that they are not nervous or squirmy on the ble. I will also make sure any girls are well past being in heat. Also most vet hospitals do not measure body temperature for routine nesthesia or tranquilization, I do because I worry. It doesn't add much time or bother to keep an eye on the dog's body temperature.

**Carmen Jane Booth, D.V.M.  
Redfire Chows and  
Chesapeaks  
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"I've seen a look in dogs' eyes, a quickly vanishing look of amazed contempt, and I am convinced that basically dogs think humans are nuts." -- John Steinbeck

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion." -- Unknown

## **TEXAS A&M VET SAYS ANIMAL ESP UNCERTAIN**

It's been a question asked for decades: Do animals have ESP?

It's hard to answer because it's never been proven in humans that such a thing as ESP (extra sensory perception) exists, says Dr. Bonnie Beaver, an expert in animal behavior at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M University.

It's been suspected ESP exists in humans, but not unequivocally proven. The same could be said for the animal world, Beaver says.

Some people suspect animals have ESP, but there's no concrete evidence to say it's so.

"A lot of the unusual phenomena that deals with animal ESP can be explained as something else," Beaver says. "Humans and animals may or not may have ESP, but the scientific proof is still not there yet."

Take earthquakes. Many animals can sense an earthquake before the first windows in a building start shaking.

"But what they are feeling are actually pre-tremors and the ground moving - they can detect it before we can because they feel it," Beaver

says. "In earthquakes, where tremors don't occur often, it's been noted that animals don't seem to sense what is coming."

Likewise, many animals - especially horses and cattle - can sense a thunderstorm before it occurs. That's true, Beaver says, but it doesn't have anything to do with ESP.

"Animals get skittish before a storm because they can feel the barometric pressure changing, or they can smell the ozone, or even hear the distant thunder," she explains. "They are reacting to something that affects them physically."

And what about those stories you hear when people move 500 miles across the country, misplace their dog or cat, and one day it shows up on the doorstep?

"Often, it's not the same animal, even though it may look very similar," Beaver says. "There have been cases when owners thought their animal had followed them hundreds of miles, even animals that were 3-legged. But it turns out the original pet was a male, and the one on the doorstep was a female. If an animal does appear on the doorstep, it may be because it has followed a scent trail, but it's very rare that it is more than a few miles."

When it comes to helping people, Beaver says, some pets are genuinely gifted. Dogs and cats have been known to alert some people when a seizure is and some dogs can even be trained to warn a person of an impending seizure," she says.

"Dogs are very aware of what is normal and not normal behavior in their owners. They can sense the muscles tightening up and the oncoming of spasms and other things that might signal the onset of a seizure. Dogs are great about reading body language of their owners and can sense a 'shift' change in people."

Sometimes, she says, animals can detect danger and they notify their owners accordingly. There are hundreds of cases of dogs or cats awakening their owners to alert them of a house fire or gas leak.

"It's in their animal nature to 'save the pack,' and pets consider their owners as part of their animal pack," Beaver adds. "What they are doing in a case like a fire is showing concern for their own pack members, which happen to be people."

Beaver says cats can hear ultra-high frequency sounds better than dogs or humans. Dogs, meanwhile, have highly developed noses, and can detect smells humans can't.

"You have to ask two questions about animal senses," Beaver says. "First, can the animal detect it? (the high sound or smell). And second, is it motivated to do anything about it? If the animal is not motivated, it goes on about its business.

"There's a lot we don't understand about the sensory capabilities of animals," she continues. "But before you can begin to talk about ESP, you have to eliminate all the other factors, and when you do, you usually find the reason to explain an action the animal makes."



"Of all the things I miss from veterinary practice, puppy breath is one of the most fond memories!" -- Dr. Tom Cat

"There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face." -- Ben Williams

"When a man's best friend is his dog, that dog has a problem." -- Edward Abbey

"Cat's motto: No matter what you've done wrong, always try to make it look like the dog did it." -- Unknown

Happy  
St. Patrick's Day



**This is the last National Newsletter you will receive if you don't get your membership fees for 2001 to:**

Vickie Barrett  
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**Make Payable to CCFC**

**NOTE FEE CHANGE**

Total Fees		
	Single	Couple
Voting Members	\$15.00	\$20.00
Foreign Members	\$20.00	\$25.00
* US Members will pay in US Funds, (This is to cover the higher cost of postage on the Newsletter).		





**A Dog's Coat Doesn't Mean Your Dog or Cat Can't Freeze While Outside**

Even though they wear fur coats, dogs -- especially very young or old ones -- can die from winter conditions as, like people, they are susceptible to hypothermia and frostbite.



If your furry companion can't spend the winter in your home, then please provide your pet with a weather- and cold-proofed shelter with an elevated base and a door flap to keep out drafts and moisture. The door should be facing away from the wind. Wood chips and hay make better bedding materials than carpet or blankets, which are likely to trap moisture and freeze.

Please remember to protect pets by keeping them inside during winter weather. Let them out only for short periods of time under supervision. Watch for shivering, cold extremities, depression or other signs of distress.

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately since untreated hypothermia can lead to death.

Bring all "outdoor" pets inside when the thermometer drops below freezing.

In addition, salt and other driveway de-icers can irritate sensitive foot pads and even poison pets if they lick their feet, so be sure to wipe off your pet's paws with a damp cloth immediately after coming in from outside.

Take special precautions if you live near a pond, stream or lake. Every year, countless pets drown in partially frozen water.

**CERTAIN ANIMALS ARE PREDISPOSED TO CANCER**

Cancer is as common in some animals as it is in people. But unlike people, certain animals have a higher incidence rate.

Dogs top the list, followed by cats.

Dogs have higher rates of skin, breast and bone cancer and leukemia. Golden retrievers, boxers and Boston terriers have the highest cancer rates, attributable to the genetic make-up of these breeds.

In addition, gray-colored horses and white-faced Herford cows have higher skin cancer

rates than dark-colored

animals of their species. Treatments for afflicted animals include surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy, all of which can be costly.

Dogs that are not spayed are at a high risk of developing mammary gland tumors, which account for over half of all canine tumors. (source: Morris Animal Foundation)

Please feel free to contact any of the Chow Chow Fanciers Exc. with ideas or questions.

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