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The Truth About Your Pet's Health

You might think you know everything about your pets—favorite sleeping spots, dietary dislikes, where to rub their bellies to get their hindquarters kicking or parts purring. But how savvy are you, really, when it comes to their health? Take our quiz to find out. No pressure—your furry friend will still love you no matter what your score.



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True or false: It's OK to skip heartworm preventive for indoor pets.

False. Neither staying indoors nor having a thick, long coat (also thought to provide protection) keeps pets safe from heartworm disease. It takes just one mosquito bite to transmit this life-threatening disease—and I don't have to tell you how adept the little buggers are at sneaking indoors.

True or False: If they eat dry food, cats and dogs won't have dental problems.

False: Just as with people, body chemistry and genetics play a huge role in determining whether your dog or cat will develop dental disease. While crunchy foods can slow the accumulation of plaque, regular brushing is the best way to keep teeth and gums healthy.

True or False: Table scraps can be part of a healthy pet's diet.

True: Unless your pup or kitty is on a strict diet, table scraps are OK with the following caveats: Avoid foods high in fat and/or sugar, and be sure "people food" doesn't make up more than 10 percent of your pet's daily calorie intake. Don't mix the goodies in with her regular food—that may encourage overeating. And unless you want a beggar on your hands, avoid feeding her directly from the table.

True or false: Anesthesia and surgery are too risky for older dogs and cats and should not be considered.

False: Anesthesia and surgery are perfectly appropriate for some—but not all—older pets. When it comes to decisions about medical procedures for your older cat or dog, his functional age is more important than his chronological age (and this has nothing to do with multiplying by seven!).

True or false: Vomiting is normal for cats.

False: Many people believe that "normal vomiting" is attributable to hairballs. Most cats will have some hair in their stomachs almost all the time. But the hair is rarely the actual cause of the vomiting. If you have a vomiting kitty on your hands, it's time to schedule an appointment with your vet.

Plump pup?

If you can't easily feel your dog's ribs and detect a clear "waistline" in front of his hips, he may be overweight. Ask your vet for her honest opinion (and brace yourself for the answer!).

Dr. Nancy Kay is a veterinarian and author of *Speaking For Spot* (speakingforspot.com).

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