



## CATS AND STRING

### What's up with cats and string?

String is usually pretty interesting to cats as it wiggles and moves as they play with it and can be fun to hunt. They may also play with and chew at rubber bands, thread, fishing line, dental floss, tinsel, sewing thread, hair ribbon and bands.

### So what is the problem?

The risk with any of these types of items is if swallowed they can cause a particular type of intestinal obstruction called a 'linear foreign body'.

This happens when one end of the linear material becomes snagged or anchored somewhere in the body (from under the tongue or anywhere through the digestive tract). As the intestines keep trying to work the anchored object out, the



natural intestinal motility causes the intestines to become bunched, often times causing an obstruction. The string can begin to cut into the intestinal lining causing both pain and spillage of bacteria and intestinal contents into the abdomen.

This is certainly an emergency that is best prevented.

### How to prevent this?

- Never let your cat play with string unobserved. If you notice them chewing on any of these types of items, remove them immediately.
- Take care with choice of toys so that they are safe and regularly inspect toys for loose threads etc.
- Use covered waste baskets in the bathroom to safely dispose of dental floss.
- Take care to carefully dispose of any string used to wrap ham or roast meats as these are particularly tasty.
- Keep any sewing or knitting craft items secured away from the cat and do not leave hair elastics within reach.
- Pay close attention around Christmas and birthdays so that tinsel or wrapping ribbons are not ingested.

### What to do if your cat has eaten some of these materials or this is suspected?

- If you suspect your cat has eaten some of these items, seek veterinary advice.
- If you see any string or rubber bands protruding from your cat's rectum, do not pull on it as this can cause more damage. Instead, see your vet so it can be safely removed once it's determined where or if it is snagged
- If you see fishing line protruding from their mouth, try tying the end to their collar to prevent further movement along the gut until you get to the vet.
- Sometimes, we may be really lucky in that the material passes through on its own, however, sometimes endoscopy (small camera) or surgery is needed to remove these safely.