

HELP - MY PET'S STOPPED EATING

It can happen in the best families... Fido or Felix won't touch their food. Or the pet guinea pigs suddenly stop eating. Vets from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo explain how pet owners should interpret this and what to do about it.

FUSSY EATERS

Dogs and cats can decide to fast quite off their own bat - above all if they've been very spoiled with food up until then. The reason: they want their masters and mistresses to come up with even tastier food. But in the end, many pet owners worry when their animal stops eating. And the vet's advice, letting their four-legged friend fast for a few days so that they start helping themselves again, often isn't heeded - instead they start feeding them with new treats or resort to luxury meals. But refusing to eat isn't always a calculated act. Sometimes dogs or cats are indeed sick because they've got an upset stomach or picked up an infection. In that case you shouldn't force them to eat, but give them time. At any rate, water and food should always be available. The best thing is to get advice from your vet if you feel the situation hasn't improved after a few days.

OFF TO THE VET'S WITH RODENTS

With pets which are vegetarian, e.g. guinea pigs and rabbits, their health is threatened if they suddenly stop eating, because unlike dogs or cats, they can always find something to eat in their natural surroundings. Their digestive system is attuned to

PET POINTERS



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that. And that's why it's highly alarming when they suddenly no longer want to eat anything. It's possible that they've been given the wrong thing to eat which has damaged their organisms and could cause serious illnesses. Teeth problems or infections can also be the cause of unintentional fasting. So go straight to the

vet! Apart from that, it's just such animals as these in particular which are in danger of being over-fed by their owners with concentrated foods through misguided love. If an animal has become too fat, it shouldn't be allowed to shed its pounds by fasting but by reducing the quantity of food bit by bit and changing over to less fattening ingredients.

NO WORRIES OVER REPTILES

Reptiles, on the other hand, have quite different reasons why they stop eating - they, most notably, can fast for a longer periods no problem. Snakes, for instance, can just as easily live together with their prey as want to devour it. That's when it's often advisable to remove the feed animal because it's more likely to do damage to the apparently defenceless snake. Snakes avoid eating, for example, before they start to cast their skin or shortly before winter hibernation. But other situations are also conceivable. Before you start worrying, just remember: your pet is quite capable of surviving for several months without food.

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