

Myth Busting – Fact or Fiction

If my dog's nose is cool/wet, this means he/she must be healthy.

I would have to say that this is the most commonly believed 'myth' – unfortunately it is simply an old wives tale. Whilst a fit and healthy dog probably does have a cool, wet nose, this is by no means an accurate way of determining whether your dog is in good health. A dog with a fever may well have a warm, dry nose, but the only accurate way of determining whether a dog has a fever is to measure their temperature rectally.

Garlic is useful in deterring/repelling/eliminating fleas.

There is absolutely no truth in this statement, garlic will not have any effect of fleas on your dog. High quantities of garlic can be dangerous. Currently the best way to prevent/eliminate fleas is to use either a spot-on product (eg, Frontline, Advantage, Revolution, Advocate) or a monthly tablet (best are Comfortis or Panoramis). The cheaper supermarket products (eg Exelpet) are less effective and contain much harsher chemicals, therefore they are not recommended. Good flea control also involves environmental clean up too, as only 5% of the flea population exists as adult fleas present on your dog or cat (the remaining 95% is present in your pet's environment, including eggs and larval stages). Environmental control includes vacuuming, washing bedding in hot water (over 60 degrees) and if large burdens exist, releasing flea bombs.

Aspirin may be given to dogs – if they are sore or limping.

Unfortunately some people will give their dogs aspirin, particularly if they have arthritis or are limping. This is not recommended by most vets. Many years ago it was used, this was before there were safer (and more effective) alternatives and before it was realised how risky this drug can be. Humans take aspirin for headaches or fevers, rarely for orthopaedic pain (ie sore limbs or back). Humans tolerate aspirin much better than our four-legged friends. Dogs certainly can't take it numerous times a day, like humans can and it is very dangerous to 'mix and match' anti-inflammatory medication (eg taking combinations of aspirin/Panadol/Nurofen in one day – this virtually guarantees problems). The risks of aspirin include liver and kidney damage and stomach ulceration. Dogs with arthritis are generally in their senior years; at this age they are even less likely to tolerate the drug well. Many humans take low doses of aspirin daily to reduce their risk of blood clots, heart attacks and strokes. However every year, thousands of people are hospitalised for stomach ulcers caused by aspirin. If you feel your dog (or cat) requires some ongoing or occasional pain relief, please consult your veterinarian before trying human alternatives.

Glucosamine may be given to dogs with arthritis.

This is actually a fact! Glucosamine is safe and effective in managing arthritic pain in dogs. There have been scientific studies that have proven that it is effective. There are many other nutraceutical products that people use in arthritic dogs including fish oil, green lipped mussel extract and shark cartilage. A lot of the evidence suggesting that these products work is anecdotal (i.e. based on people's experiences and observations) rather than being scientifically proven (by randomised double-blind studies). Some people do give their dogs human products, however I do recommend using a registered veterinary product such as Joint Guard or Glyde. These products contain glucosamine and chondroitin (and green lipped mussel in the case of Glyde)

in optimal rations and dosing regimes for dogs. Please contact your veterinarian to discuss appropriate products should you think your dog would benefit from one of these products.

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