Common Health Concerns: Small Animal

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It is extremely important to handle and observe your small pet on a daily basis. Because most small animals are prey species they tend to hide symptoms of weakness or illness as a form of protection against predators. Many times pet owners do not observe these symptoms until the animal is seriously ill.

Keeping your pet’s habitat and food containers clean, providing a nutritious diet, maintaining consistent observations and providing daily exercise can help prevent many illnesses that affect small animals.

Monitor your Pet

Monitoring the following items on a regular basis can alert you to any possible changes in your pet’s health:

- Monitor any change in food or water consumption.
- Monitor the consistency of fecal matter (check for diarrhea).
- Monitor any change in activity level or sleep patterns.
- Examine teeth to make sure the incisors are not overgrown (the upper and lower teeth should meet when the animal bites down).
- Check for drooling or wet chin and neck areas.
- Monitor appearance. Look for hair loss, lesions, nasal discharge, ocular (eye) discharge, lumps and bumps.
- Check coat condition to make sure it is not too oily, rough or dry.

Select your Veterinarian

It is extremely important to have a veterinarian that specializes in small animals. There are many medications and antibiotics that are poisonous to small animals and not all veterinarians may be familiar with those drugs that are safe. It is important to choose a veterinarian that is comfortable with handling small animals and one that has had lots of experience treating them.

Be Observant

It is also important to be observant. Pay attention to the daily routine of your small companion and note any change in behavior or appearance. Your observation skills may mean the difference between life and death for your tiny friend.