OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER DISPLAYED IN COMPANION ANIMALS

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Our psychological state. It is being is closely intertwined with under pressure. Physical well-
become depressed and is then usually easier to fight off com-
mon infections, such as colds or influenza, when a person is in a happy emotional state.

Animal OCD

Companion animals cannot understand changes in owner-
ship or house moves, nor can any particular fluctuating situation be explained to them. It is for this rea-
son that adopted dogs, cats, horses and parrots – even those passed between extended fam-
ily members – invariably display some signs of stress.

In dogs, the effect of stress and the break in their relation-
ship with individuals can lead to owner attachment problems. In dogs and cats, this change in ownership and moving house (which represents a territorial change to canines and felines) can lead to the development of separation-related disorder. This is where dogs repeatedly bark or even howl, and cats demonstratively cry or spray during owner absence. Some dogs become incredibly destructive in the home or may toilet indoors. All companion animals can begin to show signs of these canine obsessive-compulsive disorder (COCOD) behaviours when they are stressed, either by problems experienced in the early socialisation period or during some time in their life. In dogs and cats, stress factors can lead to over-grooming, and in tropi-
cal birds, feather plucking and a range of abnormal behaviours.

In equine cases, stress can lead to extreme behaviours that include head-weening, stable door chewing or teeth grinding that leads to neck, mouth and tooth damage.

In avian cases, stress-related behaviours, such as over-green-
ing, can result in a rather sad-looking, bald parrot. Dogs chewing and licking excessively can develop infected limbs, severe fur loss and bald patches and, in rare, chronic cases, seizures.

In one of my most memo-
rable cases of canine obsessive and compulsive behaviour it was possible to observe a young Ger-
man shepherd dog, as it began tail-chasing, almost immediately develop a pre-seizure state and collapse. This acute exhibition of behaviour – often seen as an amaz-
ing to family members – become extremely distress-
ing to observe. The dog had been re-homed within the family by the adult son to his parents and the break in this attach-
ment triggered the condition.

In feline pre-
sentations of the condition, cats have been known to groom to such an extent that fur loss and dermatalological deterioration occurs. In some cases, where blood tests eliminated physical causes, the feline obsessive-
compulsive disorder (FOD) condition could be linked to withdrawn behaviour.

Repeat that

All the repetitive behaviour per-
formances that have been men-
tioned are known as stereotypical beha-
viours as they pace from one side of the enclosure to another.

The mark on this stable door shows evidence of head weening by its occupant.

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Zoo-bound bears, tigers or lions can be observed performing self-rewarding behaviours as they pace from one side of the enclosure to another.

This parrot’s over-plucked chest is a stress-related behaviour.