

WESTIE THINGS THAT MAY CONCERN YOU

There are some common traits among Westies that might cause you worry and concern if you are not aware of them up front. We thought it might help if you had a list of some of these things so you will know what is happening if or when it occurs.

THROWING UP BILE

Many, if not most, Westie owners will notice that their little one sometimes throws up a yellow, sometimes foamy white, substance called bile. This usually occurs in the early morning. It normally occurs simply because the tummy emptied over night and the normal bile which is created in the dog's system to digest food has nothing to work on. It upsets the tummy and is thrown up. Most "cure" this problem by giving puppy something to eat just before bed that has a lot of fiber in it. This might include a high fiber biscuit or even a piece of raw stew beef.

Sometimes, if the dog does throw up bile, it is hard to get them to eat in the morning. Since eating is what will make them feel better, you may have to offer them something really tasty, like a piece of cheese to get them started.

If your dog's tummy gurgles and rumbles in the night and he won't eat in the morning, it may be something more serious going on. See your vet if feeding fiber doesn't help. IBD, Giardia and other issues may be causing the problem. But most of the time it is a simple solution. There is a product available called "Forta Flora" which can be used to help get "good" bacteria into the "gut" and can straighten out many tummy issues. Your vet can provide this product.

REVERSE SNEEZING

Most Westies will eventually startle you with an episode of "reverse sneezing". This is simply the dog seeming to sneeze inwardly and consecutively. No one knows for sure what causes this but it isn't anything to worry about. It can be stopped in several ways or you can just let it stop on its own. Ways to stop it:

- Put your hand on their throat and massage
- Blow in their nose
- Cover their nose and blow in their mouth

Generally these will stop it or give you something to do until it stops on its own!

SCRATCHING

Most Westies will scratch at some point. There is an article on our Rescue website that might help you.

Please try to avoid resorting to repeated steroid shots or pills to fix this. Steroids will eventually cause other serious damage. If your vet insists that steroids are the way to go, please look for a vet who will consider alternatives such as Atopica. (Take our article to your vet.)

If your dog starts getting damaged skin, hair loss, smelly skin, see your vet immediately. This can be very serious very quickly. They often respond well to frequent, even daily, bathing in a medicated shampoo (using a skin conditioner such as Humilac each time). But this isn't something to

ignore and hope for the best. See the vet. Call us if you want to talk about it more. Don't let it get out of control.

FOOD

Many Westies are sensitive to certain things such as corn, wheat, soy and artificial preservatives. Some will not react to these things and some will. If your dog is itchy, check the ingredients on the bag. Try avoiding these things and see if it helps. Most allergies are not food based but for some Westies, they are. (Note: If your Westie gets a steroid shot and it stops the itching, then it is not likely to have anything to do with the diet the dog is on at that time.) Some Westies are unable to eat chicken and turkey. Others might have trouble with beef or lamb. It is a very individual thing. You may need to do an elimination diet. This is best done with professional guidance. A good source of information on food and diets is <http://www.monicasegal.com>. At her site, you will find a link to her email list where diet issues are discussed exclusively. If you feed kibble, be sure it is a good quality kibble and not a grocery store brand. Look at the ingredients when making your choice.

STAPH

Many Westies are prone to a staph infection in the hot months. The dog will be very itchy. This usually looks like scabby gray "things" that, if located in the hair, will cause the hair to come out. Often they are on the face around the mouth and nose. This requires an antibiotic so visit your vet.

KNEE INJURIES

ACL Westies are a breed that often will suffer ACL injuries. Some will let it go if it is not too serious but doing so will increase the level of arthritis that will eventually occur. Generally, the injured ACL will eventually tear and require surgery.

LUXATED PATELLA This is a condition which is usually genetic. The knee is loose in the socket and will pop in and out. If your dog is running, and shakes the leg and then continues to run, it is often because shaking the leg will put the knee back in place. It is common among puppy mill dogs. If our vets notice this, we will let you know at the time of adoption. But it is not something we will repair because the repair should not be done until it is absolutely necessary. Often it is never needed. Most vets will not repair it unless it is causing the dog a lot of pain.

DOG FIGHTS Dogs will fight occasionally. This subject is covered extensively in the article entitled "Introducing Dogs". Please note that when terriers play they often make noises that might easily be misinterpreted as "fighting". Growling and even snarling can actually be "just play" sounds. Don't panic over the noise. Small dogs often make big noises simply because they are small. They use the noise to scare the opponent. And animal play is often just "practice" fighting. Let them have their fun!

PICKING UP A WESTIE A lot of people pick up a dog from the front, grasping them under the front legs. This is okay if your Westie is used to it but many Westies don't care for that method. Until you know your new dog, or if your dog is sensitive about being picked up, it is best to pick them up from the side. Put your arm under the dog to give the dog a feeling of support. Some put fingers of one hand in the collar so as to limit head movement if they feel at all threatened when picking up a dog. Always remember to give the dog warning. Don't swoop down and grab the dog

from behind and pick him up unexpectedly. If your dog does not like to be picked up, break this down into pieces and practice it with lots of treats and praise. Teach him to be picked up but do it over a stretch of time, several days or weeks.

TOUCHING Often dogs are sensitive about funny things. Many Westies dislike having their feet touched. Some don't like their back ends touched. Be careful with your new dog until you learn what they are comfortable with. Again, if they don't like something, work at it slowly using treats and praise to help them overcome their fears and dislikes. We have seen problems show up when people bring the dog indoors and decide to wipe their feet with a towel. The dog doesn't like having his feet touched and now you are doing it by hiding your hands under a towel. The towel is moving which can bring out the predator instinct in a dog. (Might that be a mouse moving under that towel?) When your dog is new, it may be more important to help them become comfortable than it is to keep your carpet perfectly clean. Work on trust and comfort and later you can work on keeping your carpet clean. You knew when you got the dog, that perfect carpets were a thing of the past, right?

REACHING FOR A DOG We mention this in the article about "What you see is not always what you get". But it is important. Just to restate, if your new dog hides somewhere, don't reach in and try to pull them out. Don't put your hands near a scared dog. If the dog is hiding under the bed and you reach under there, you are asking to be bitten! And it is your fault if it happens. Instead, try luring the dog out with really good treats (Cheese, hotdog bits, etc.) Or just leave the room. Try leaving the room in a trot, calling the dog as you go. If he doesn't come right out, he will eventually. Remember that a scared dog is often an unsafe dog. Even the nicest dog is liable to bite if he is scared enough. Don't make this happen. If you return him because the dog bit you, even if it was your fault, we may have to put the dog down. Please try to understand the traumas this dog has been through. Work with him and help him to be a success. You will be rewarded when the dog learns to trust you.