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VITAL SIGNS OBSERVATION

Observation can provide valuable important information of your pet's condition, especially if there is a change from when your pet was first noticed to be unwell.

THINGS TO MONITOR:

1. General appearance:

- Alert
- Calm
- Quiet
- Aggressive
- Agitated
- Anxious

2. Conscious state:

- Normal: conscious and responsive
- Abnormal:
 - Drowsy
 - Disorientated
 - Conscious but non-responsive
 - Unconscious

3. Pulse (number of heart beats per minute):

- In cats, thin dogs, small dogs and dogs with keel (narrow) chest: feel for heart beat directly over chest
- Large dogs: locate femoral pulse by placing two fingers on the inside of groin region
- You should feel pulsing from the femoral artery, the large artery taking blood to the leg
- Count pulses for 30 seconds and multiply by 2 to get number of beats per 60 seconds/minute
- Record this number

4. Breathing (number of breaths per minute):

- Monitor movement of chest
- Rise and fall of the chest = 1 breath
- Depth of breath = normal, deep or shallow
- Note any abnormal sounds: cough, loud noises, wheezing, crackles

5. Gum colour:

- Normal: Pink and moist
- Abnormal:
 - Pale, white
 - Yellow (jaundiced)
 - Blue/ grey
 - Blood spots
 - Bruising
 - Bleeding

6. Capillary refill time (CRT):

- Press onto the gums and watch for the colour to disappear
- Count the seconds it takes for the colour to fully return
- This indicates how well the blood supply to the surface of the body is:
 - Normal: 1-2 seconds
 - Delayed: >2 seconds
 - Increased: <1 seconds

7. Temperature:

- Only if you have a thermometer at home
- Rectal temperature
- Temperature under arm pit

	DOGS	CATS
HEART RATE/PULSE RATE (beats per minute)	70-160	140-180
RESPIRATORY RATE (breaths per minute)	15-30	20-30
MUCOUS MEMBRANE COLOUR	Pink	Pink
CAPILLARY REFILL TIME (seconds)	1-2	1-2
RECTAL TEMPERATURE (°C)	37.5-39.0	37.8-39.0

Femoral pulse could be difficult to feel especially in pets that are experiencing shock or abnormal heart rhythms.

To take temperature, ensure thermometer is pushed up against the wall of the rectum and not down the middle as it will most likely end up in a ball of faeces.