

# Ask A Vet: Shivering Elderly Dog Raises Concern

*Sunday, February 7, 2016*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My 12 year old dog has been shivering quite often even when inside the house by the fireplace. Is there a medical reason for this? Should I get him looked at?

-Concerned

Dear Concerned,

I am so glad you asked about this as we do get questions concerning this often enough that I would like to address the possible causes of these issues. We often will get clients calling in a panic about their dog or cat shivering or just shaking uncontrollably. There a number of reasons they might do this and they include anything from actual pain, anxiety, fear, nerves or just being cold. There are even some disorders of the endocrine system such as the adrenal glands known as Addison's disease that cause this as well. One can expect dogs/cats to shake due to noise associated with fireworks, thunderstorms, construction or sirens. If it was cold related to outside temperature and you yourself are cold , then getting warmed up inside will take care of the problem. Have a blanket when transporting animals to and from places over the dog/cat carrier or a blanket when out for long walks with booties as well for the feet.

The most common reason probably truthfully is associated with pain. Sometimes it is difficult to really assess the amount of pain an animal has. Deciding the degree of pain and as to whether the animal needs to go to the veterinarian can best be done by a few guidelines. The first of these guidelines is shivering that is also associated with excessive panting. This happens with stress and intense pain or discomfort. Most common examples of these include: abnormal leg abnormalities, fractures; bloat (known as gastric dilatation-volvulus or GDV); ,pancreatitis or other gastrointestinal problems; stiffness or refusal to move especially in the neck or back; ataxia ( wobbly gait as if drunk) possibly associated with a herniated disc or muscle problem. All of these warrant seeking medical attention as soon as possible and may be deemed medical emergencies where failing to act may be detrimental to your pet. Be sure to check with your veterinarian before giving any medications to your pet for pain as some may interfere with your vets treatment plan and some such as Tylenol will kill a cat. There is almost always a veterinarian on call to answer questions and advise what to give in an emergency.

Some causes are more subtle .If the pet is a little off or ADR meaning "ain't doing right", start by taking a temperature ( the on call vet will probably ask for this anyway). Normal temperatures are 100.5-102.5 for dogs and cats. If normal temperature and are not showing signs of vomiting, diarrhea,,or the above mentioned things and still wants to eat or go for a walk, one could wait a day or so before contacting the veterinarian. If after 24 hours and the pet is still lethargic or won't eat or go on walks, it is time for us to see them.

-Dr. Wanda Schmeltz