

Food Poisoning

Although cats rarely experience food poisoning, precautions are important. Learn how to prevent food poisoning in your pet.

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Luckily, food poisoning in cats is uncommon. That's not surprising when you consider the items a cat might eat on a regular basis, such as bugs, birds and mice. Cats are resistant to many common bacteria.

Salmonella is a bacterium found in meat, eggs or poultry and is destroyed by proper cooking. This is the main type of food poisoning found in cats. If a cat eats food carrying salmonella, she can pass the bacteria to humans through her feces. It is not common, however, for cats exposed to these bacteria to develop active infections. Cats usually have subclinical infections, meaning they can shed the bacteria, but the cats themselves do not show signs of illness. Salmonella infection in a cat is diagnosed by culturing her feces. If the infection spreads throughout the cat's body, blood culturing is possible, too. In all cases of food poisoning, good hygiene when handling and storing food, plus proper cooking and preparation, can prevent problems.

Beyond these precautions, remember that turkey left sitting out is a potential source of salmonella or staphylococcal contamination. These bacteria can make a curious and hungry cat sick. Food packaging and wrappers can be potential hazards, too, because bacteria can grow on these surfaces. Being discriminating creatures, most cats do not frequently eat garbage, but some eat cellophane or aluminum foil, especially if food is on it. Besides bacterial contamination, these materials can cause intestinal obstruction and illness if swallowed.