

Keeping Your Pet Hydrated

Cats and dogs may be very different animals, but they do have some things in common. They both need a lot of play, rest and attention to be happy, and they both need to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Cats need around 300ml each day to stay properly hydrated, and dogs need to drink from 600ml (a terrier) to 1200ml (a labrador).

It's not just their size that means cats and dogs approach drinking in different ways. Many of the habits we see in today's house cats have been inherited from their wild ancestors.

Once, a very long time ago, cats lived in the deserts of the African Wilds. Living in this kind of dry environment, cats needed to become very good at sniffing out water. Literally: their sense of smell was so well developed they were able to smell it! Typically, they'd look for clear and clean water, most likely from a running stream.

Now, centuries later, the common house cat is still able to smell water! They also tend to prefer to drink from a running stream rather than from their bowl. This tends to be because they're more likely to get their whiskers wet drinking from their bowl! Cats are still very particular about how their water is presented, they'll refuse to drink dirty water.

Dogs are very different. They've always been happy to drink water whatever condition it is, the muddier it is the better! Dogs also tend to make a lot more mess, the area around a dogs drinking bowl is usually covered with a mixture of spilt water and slobber! There is a point to all that mess, as dogs take in a lot more water per lap than cats do.

Keeping your pet hydrated is very important, as dehydration can lead very quickly to serious illness. Whether you have a cat or a dog, you need to make sure that your pet has constant access to fresh water. This is especially important in hot weather, when your pet is unwell, or with senior pets.

If you are worried that your pet isn't drinking enough water, there are some ways to encourage him to drink more. One very easy way to do this is to switch from dry food to wet food. Dry food contains around 10% water, while wet food contains 75%. Switching from one to the other can very quickly increase your pet's water intake.

Another option is to start using a pet drinking fountain. These replicate the running stream that pets so often choose to drink from while in the wild. They're suitable for both cats and dogs, and are available in a range of different sizes.

Pet fountains are particularly appreciated by cats, as they remember their ancestor's days at babbling brooks. Dogs may be happy drinking from a regular water bowl most of the time, but when they're ill, a free falling fountain can be a very helpful tool for encouraging them to drink.

The important thing to remember is to encourage your pets to drink as much as possible. Look out for warning signs of dehydration, and be aware of changes in weather and age and how they might affect your pet's water needs.