

PHYSICAL EXAM

AT A DISTANCE

Examine the animal from a short distance and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the animal behaving normally: does it look more tired, is it showing signs of aggression or fear?
- Is the animal drinking and eating as much as it would normally?
- Are the animal's stools and urine normal?
- Is the animal vomiting or having diarrhea?
- Is the animal showing signs of pain: is it limping or crying?
- Is there anything different on the animal: is it injured or bleeding?

UP CLOSE

The heartbeat, breathing rate, temperature, the gums and the stools have to be evaluated on a sick or injured animal.

HEARTBEAT

To evaluate an animal's heartbeat, place your hands on its chest as shown on the picture. Count the number of beats you can feel in 10 seconds. The best time to evaluate this parameter is when the animal is at rest.



BREATHING RATE

Stand at the animal's side and count the number of times its chest rises (breathing in) in 10 seconds when it is at rest (not panting). It is abnormal if its breathing rate is higher than 8 times per 10 seconds.

It is also abnormal if the animal is having difficulty breathing, is coughing or is making sounds when breathing.

TEMPERATURE

Take the animal's rectal temperature using a thermometer. Dip the thermometer in Vaseline® or in water before using it. Insert it horizontally about 2 centimetres in the animal's rectum and leave it in place for about a minute or until the thermometer beeps. A dog's normal temperature ranges between 37,5°C and 39,0°C (98,6°F and 102,2°F).



STOOLS

The animal's stools should be well formed (solid). It is abnormal if you find fresh blood (red) or digested blood (black) in them.

GUMS



1. Lift the upper lip of the animal and run your finger on the gums. They should be pink and a little bit wet;
2. Place your finger on the gums and apply pressure on them for 2 to 3 seconds;



3. Let the pressure go. At first, the gums should be white as shown on this picture;



4. Quickly, the gums will become pink again as shown on this picture. Count how many seconds it takes for the gums to go from white to pink. It should take 2 seconds or less.

It is abnormal if it takes 3 seconds or more for the gums to go from white to pink. It is also abnormal if the gums are very pale, blue or dark red. If you note these changes, you should contact the Veterinary Help Line.



Contact the Veterinary Help Line to seek free veterinary advice at 514 345-8521 ext. 0065 or nunavik@chuv.umontreal.ca