

OBSERVING THE NORMAL ANIMAL

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PURPOSE: Learn to use your senses to develop skill in recognizing the normal healthy animal.

Your project animal's health depends on you. You must be able to recognize normalities in order to recognize abnormalities. A systematic way to observe normals is by performing a **physical exam** on your project animal. Be gentle and calm when handling your animal!

THE BASIC PROCEDURE FOLLOWS.

Step 1: Be sure your equipment is handy. You may need: containers with food, water, brush, grooming tools; thermometer, vaseline; stethoscope, watch with second hand.

Step 2: Try to evaluate mental condition. Comparison or familiarity with the animal's normal behavior is important. Does the animal's attitude seem sad or unusually excited?

Step 3: Observe stance. Is the animal's posture normal? Does it hunch its back? This may indicate abdominal pain.

Step 4: Observe movement (gait). Is there evidence of limping (e.g., stiff joints may indicate arthritis)?

Step 5: Listen to voice. Is the cat purring? Is the dog whining?

Step 6: Is appetite normal? Perhaps offer food and water. Keep a record. Mark the water bowl.

Step 7: Observe sexual activity when it occurs. Record heat periods on your calendar.

Step 8: Observe general body condition. Is the animal too fat or too thin?

Step 9: Skin and coat condition. Is hair falling out? Is skin dry and flaky? Does coat shine?

Step 10: Skin color. Press gums. Pink color should come back rapidly. If area remains whitish, animal could be anemic.

Step 11: Examine mucous membranes. Check eyelids, nostrils, mouth, anus, vulva opening. These tissues should be moist and pink. If these areas are not clean it may be because the animal is not feeling well and neglecting itself.

Step 12: Examine discharges. Feces and urine should be normal in color consistency when the animal is healthy. Vulva secretions may indicate infection or sexual activity (in heat).

Step 13: Check body temperature, pulse and respiration rates.

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THE NORMAL ANIMAL OBSERVATION CHART

Record observations of your project animal on this chart for one week. Use the health supplement to help you with normals and words to use. When complete, review your observations and note differences from day to day. Continue to observe your animal daily. You may see significant differences from month to month and season to season.

CHARACTERISTICS	OBSERVATIONS						
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
1. ATTITUDE							
2. STANCE							
3. MOVEMENT							
4. VOICE							
5. APPETITE/WEIGHT							
6. SKIN AND HAIR COAT							
7. MUCOUS MEMBRANES							
8. BODY WASTE AND DISCHARGES							
9. TEMPERATURE (Normal)							
10. PULSE RATE (Normal)							
11. RESPIRATION RATE (Normal)							
12. OTHER OBSERVATIONS							