

# How to Understand Common Veterinary Terms

The terms listed below are commonly used in such fields as anatomy, physiology, and epidemiology, and make up much of the technical jargon that veterinarians use to describe symptoms, illnesses, even surgical techniques. On the reverse side, you'll also find a few common abbreviations spelled out to help you understand the meaning of prescription slips and medical instructions concerning treatment of the animals in your care.

**acute** (uh-KYOOT): Of sudden onset; having a short course.

**adhesion** (ad-HEE-zhun): Abnormal fibrous union of tissues; process of joining or sticking together.

**anemia** (uh-NEE-mee-uh): Condition characterized by reduced numbers of red blood cells.

**anesthesia** (A-nehs-THEE-zee-uh): State of being without sensation, especially to pain. May or may not be accompanied by unconsciousness (general anesthesia vs. local anesthesia).

**anorexia** (A-noh-REHK-see-uh): Lack of appetite.

**apnea** (AP-nee-uh): Cessation of breathing.

**arrhythmia** (ay-RITH-mee-uh, uh-RITH-mee-uh): Variation in rhythm of the heart beat.

**artery** (AHR-teh-ree): Vessel through which blood flows away from the heart to various parts of the body.

**aspirate** (A-spi-rayt): To remove fluid or gas from a cavity by suction; to inhale; material withdrawn by aspiration (A-spi-rayt).

**atrophy** (A-troh-fee): Wasting away of a body part.

**benign** (beh-NYN, bee-NYN): Not malignant; with a favorable prognosis.

**bilateral** (by-LA-ter-uul): Occurring on both sides of the body.

**biopsy** (BY-ahp-see): Removal of a small amount of tissue from the body for examination, usually microscopic.

**bloat** (bloht): Gaseous distention of the stomach or other part of the gastrointestinal tract.

**bolus** (BOH-luhs): Mass of food ready to be swallowed or passing through the intestines; a large pill; a large volume of fluid rapidly given intravenously.

**cartilage** (KAHR-ti-lij): Specialized fibrous connective tissue found in the embryo, developing bones, and joints.

**cataract** (KA-tuh-rakt): Opacity (or cloudiness) of the lens of the eye.

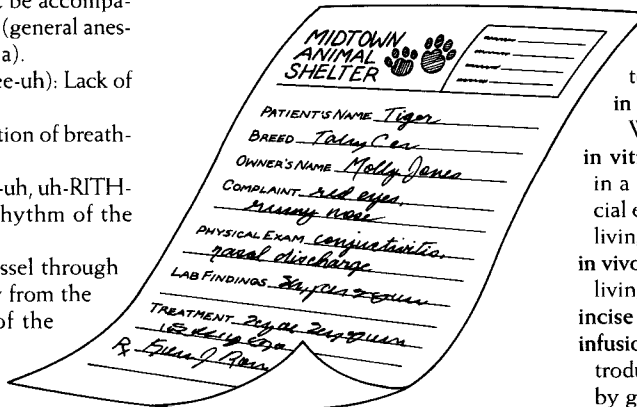
**chronic** (KRAH-nik): Persisting over a

long period.

**coagulation** (koh-AG-yoo-LAY-shuhn): Clot formation; solidification of a solution into a gelatinous mass.

**congenital** (kahn-JEH-ni-tuul): Present at birth.

**conjunctiva** (KAHN-juhnh-TY-vuh): Soft pink tissue lining the inner eyelids and eye socket, and the clear covering of the exposed surface of the eyeball.



**conjunctivitis** (kahn-JUHNK-ti-VY-tis): Inflammation of the conjunctiva (see above).

**cryptorchidism** (krip-TOR-kid-izm): Condition in which one or both testicles have not descended into the scrotum, but are retained within the body.

**cyanosis** (SY-uh-NOH-sis): Bluish discoloration of the mucous membranes and skin caused by poor oxygen supply to the body tissue.

**dysplasia** (dis-PLAY-zhee-uh): Abnormal development in size or shape.

**dyspnea** (DISP-nee-uh): Difficulty in breathing; labored respirations.

**edema** (eh-DEE-muh): Accumulation of excessive fluid within tissues.

**embolism** (EHM-boh-lizm): Sudden obstruction of a blood vessel by a clot or foreign material brought to the area by the flow of blood.

**estrus** (EHS-truhs): The cyclic period of sexual receptivity in female mammals.

**gastritis** (gas-TRY-tis): Inflammation of

the stomach.

**hematoma** (HEE-muh-TOH-muh): A blood clot within an organ, space, or tissue.

**hemorrhage** (HEH-mor-ij): Escape of blood from a vessel; bleeding.

**hyperthermia** (HY-per-THER-mee-uh): Abnormally high body temperature.

**hypothermia** (HY-poh-THER-mee-uh): Abnormally low body temperature.

**in utero** (in YOO-teh-roh): Within the uterus.

**in vitro** (in VEE-troh): Within a test tube or other artificial environment, outside the living body.

**in vivo** (in VEE-voh): Inside the living body.

**incise** (in-SYZ): To cut.

**infusion** (in-FYOO-zhuhn): Introduction of fluid into a vein by gravity flow.

**intubate** (IN-too-bayt): To insert a tube into a body canal or hollow organ, such as the trachea or stomach.

**irrigate** (EER-i-gayt): To wash out or flush; lavage.

**lesion** (LEE-zhuhn): Any discontinuity of tissue or loss of function.

**ligament** (LI-guh-mehnt): Band of dense fibrous tissue connecting bones and supporting joints.

**malignant** (muh-LIG-nuhnt): Tending to become progressively worse and result in death. Often used to define potentially fatal tumors.

**malocclusion** (MAL-oh-KLOO-zhuhn): Improper alignment of the upper and lower teeth.

**mastitis** (mas-TY-tis): Inflammation of the mammary glands.

**mentation** (men-TAY-shun): Mental state of the animal.

**metabolic** (MEH-tuh-BAH-lik): Pertaining to the physiologic processes by which cells and tissues are produced and maintained.

*It may seem as though veterinarians speak a foreign language at times, and considering the Latin origin of many medical terms, they may in fact be doing so. The veterinary terms and definitions listed here should help to break down the "language barrier" that often separates many animal caregivers from those who provide professional veterinary treatment.*

*Most of the definitions presented here are taken from Guide to Veterinary Medical Terminology, by Phillip E. Cochran, DVM, MS, published 1991 by Mosby-Yearbook, Inc., 11830 Westline Industrial Dr., St. Louis, MO 63146; 800-325-4177. Those seeking more information regarding medical terminology may also wish to refer to Dorland's Medical Dictionary.*

CUT AND PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE FOR YOUR OWN REFERENCE. FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING, AND/OR FOR USE BY ADOPTERS.

**morbidity** (mor-BI-di-tee): Ratio of sick to healthy animals in a population.

**mortality** (mor-TAL-i-tee): Death rate; ratio of total deaths in a given population (may or may not be limited to a particular disease) to the total number of animals in a given population.

**mucous membrane** (MYOO-kuss MEM-brayn): Soft pink tissue lining bodily openings such as the eyes, mouth, and nose.

**necropsy** (NEE-krahp-see): Examination of a body after death. *Necropsy* is the preferred term for examination of animal cadavers, while *autopsy* is the preferred term for

**palpation** (pal-PAY-shuhn): Using the hands to examine body parts during physical examination.

**pathogen** (PA-thoh-jehn): A disease-producing microorganism.

**pathology** (pa-THAH-loh-jee): Study of the essential nature of disease, especially the effects of disease on tissue structure and function.

**peritoneal cavity** (PAIR-i-toh-NEE-uul KAV-i-tee): Space within the abdominal cavity between the internal organs and the abdominal wall.

**pleural cavity** (PLOO-ruul KAV-i-tee): Space within the thoracic cavity between the thoracic organs (such as the lungs and heart) and the body wall.

**polydactyly** (PAH-lee-DAK-ti-lee): Presence of extra toes.

**post mortem** (pohst MOR-tehm): After death.

**prepubertal** (pree-PYOO-ber-tuul): Before sexual maturity.

**pyometra** (PY-oh-MEE-truh): Accumulation of pus in the uterus due to bacterial infection of the uterus.

**recumbent** (ree-KUHM-behnt): Lying down.

**rehydrate** (ree-HY-drayt): To replace lost body fluids; to reverse dehydration.

**remission** (ree-MI-shuhn): Lessening or abatement of signs of a disease; the period when signs of disease have abated or decreased.

**resistance** (ree-ZI-stehns):

Natural ability of the body to remain unaffected by poisonous substances and pathogenic microorganisms. In microbiology, it refers to lack of efficacy of a drug on a microorganism.

**rigor mortis** (RIGER-MOR-tis): Stiffening of a dead body.

**sedative** (SEH-duh-tiv): Agent that reduces activity or decreases excitement.

**septicemia** (SEHP-ti-SEE-mee-uh): Presence of microorganisms or their toxins in the blood.

**shock** (shahk): Acute failure of blood circulation throughout the body characterized by cool extremities, rapid heart rate, and pale mucous membranes.

**slough** (sluhf): To cast off or shed dead tissue.

**stupor** (STOO-per): Partial unconsciousness.

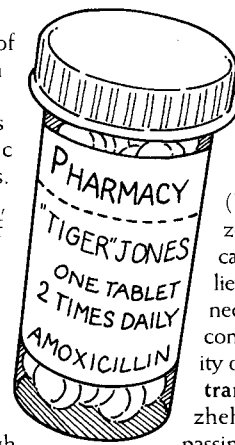
**superficial** (SOO-per-FI-shuul): Near the surface.

**syndrome** (SIN-drohnm): A set of specific medical signs occurring together as the usual course of a disease or condition.

**systemic** (si-STEh-mik): Affecting the body as a whole.

**topical** (TAH-pi-kuul): Pertaining to a surface area.

**tourniquet** (TOR-ni-keht): Any device applied to an extremity or part to reduce blood flow.



**toxicology** (TAHK-si-KAH-loh-jee): Study of poisons.

**tranquilizer** (TRAN-kwi-LY-zer): Drug used to calm an animal or relieve anxiety without necessarily altering consciousness or clarity of thought.

**transient** (TRAN-zhehnt): Temporary; passing away with time.

**traumatic** (trah-MA-tik): Pertaining to or as a result of injury.

**turbid** (TER-bid): Cloudy.

**unilateral** (YOO-ni-LA-teh-ruul): Affecting only one side.

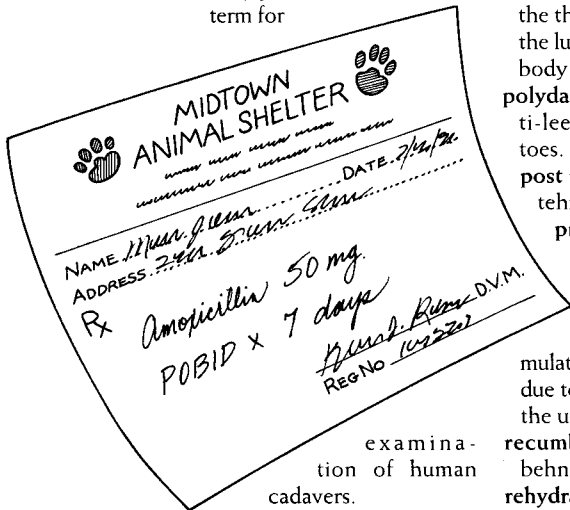
**urinalysis** (YOO-ri-NAL-i-sis): Analysis of urine by chemical and microscopic examination.

**vaccine** (VAK-seen): A suspension of killed or weakened microorganisms that, when introduced into the body, stimulates an immune response against that microorganism.

**venipuncture** (VEH-ni-PUHNK-cher): Puncture of a vein with a needle.

**virus** (VY-ruhs): An infectious agent that replicates only inside a living cell, and lacks the ability for life outside of the cells of another living being.

**zoonoses** (ZOH-oh-NOH-seez): Animal diseases that can be transmitted under natural conditions to people. ■



examination of human cadavers.

**necrotic** (neh-KRAH-tik): Pertaining to or characterized by dead tissue.

**neonatal** (NEE-oh-NAY-tuul): Pertaining to the first few weeks after birth.

**ophthalmic** (ahf-THAL-mik): Pertaining to the eye.

**COMMON ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ARF</b> acute renal (kidney) failure	<b>FelV</b> feline leukemia virus	<b>ICU</b> intensive care unit	<b>OD</b> right eye	<b>Sx</b> surgery
<b>BAR</b> bright, alert, and responsive	<b>FIP</b> feline infectious peritonitis	<b>IM</b> intramuscular	<b>OS</b> left eye	<b>TID</b> three times daily
<b>BID</b> twice daily	<b>FLUTD</b> feline lower urinary tract disease	<b>IP</b> intraperitoneal	<b>OU</b> both eyes	<b>TPR</b> temperature, pulse, respiration
<b>BMR</b> basal metabolic rate	<b>FUS</b> feline urological syndrome	<b>IT</b> intrathoracic	<b>PER OS, PO</b> orally; by mouth	<b>Tx</b> treatment
<b>BP</b> blood pressure	<b>GI</b> gastrointestinal	<b>IV</b> intravenous	<b>PM</b> postmortem (after death)	<b>URI</b> upper respiratory infection
<b>CNS</b> central nervous system	<b>HBC</b> hit by car	<b>MLV</b> modified live virus	<b>PRN</b> as necessary	<b>UTI</b> urinary tract infection
<b>CRF</b> chronic renal (kidney) failure	<b>Hx</b> history	<b>NAF</b> no abnormalities found	<b>QID</b> four times daily	<b>WNL</b> within normal limits
<b>EENT</b> eyes, ears, nose, throat	<b>IC</b> intracardiac	<b>NPO</b> nothing per os (nothing by mouth)	<b>Rx</b> prescription	
		<b>NSF</b> no significant findings	<b>SC or SQ</b> subcutaneous	
			<b>SID</b> once daily	