

SUBCUTANEOUS FLUID ADMINISTRATION

Administration of supplemental fluids can benefit pets with a number of different medical conditions. Most commonly, SQ fluids are recommended for cats with kidney disease or who are not eating for a variety of reasons. Although the idea of giving fluids may initially be intimidating, most owners find it is not nearly as difficult as it would seem. The potential benefit to your pet will make it well worth your time to learn this simple technique.

Supplies:

The equipment consists of a bag of fluids, a drip set, and a needle. The drip set is simply a tube that connects the fluid bag to the needle. The fluid bag and drip set can be used several times but a new needle must be used each time you administer fluids. When replacing a used needle with a new one, make sure that the end of the drip set does not become contaminated by touching anything before you attach the new clean needle.

Fluid Administration:

- ❑ Choose a location where you will treat your cat. This may be on a table, counter top, or in your lap. Ideally, the cat should be in an upright position (not laying on its side) when you administer the fluids. Some owners find that placing the cat in a box with an open top is helpful. Be sure it is somewhere where both you and your cat will be comfortable for about 10-15 minutes.
- ❑ Hang the fluid bag about 2 to 3 feet above the level of your cat's head in a location where the end of the drip set will easily reach the cat. Make sure a new clean needle is attached to the drip set.
- ❑ Pick up a loose roll of skin at approximately the level of the shoulder blades. Remove the needle cap. Lay the point of the needle at the base of the roll of skin with the needle parallel to the cat's body. Advance the needle slightly forward while pulling the roll of skin backward. This should place the point of the needle underneath the skin. Release the roll of skin, leaving the point of the needle under the skin.
- ❑ Begin the flow of fluids by rolling the roller on the drip set lock upward.
- ❑ When you have finished giving the recommended amount of fluids, stop the flow of fluids by rolling the roller on the drip set downward firmly. If you do not close it all the way and the bag is left hanging, fluid will drip.
- ❑ Remove the needle from the skin and replace its protective cap. If a small amount of fluid begins to leak out from under the skin from where the needle was placed, gently pinch the skin at this point for a minute to help close the hole.
- ❑ Give your cat a treat and yourself a pat on the back for having given the fluids.

General Considerations:

- ❑ It is not necessary to "sterilize" the skin with alcohol before inserting the needle. In reality, wiping a little alcohol on the skin does not really sterilize it, and the odor and feel of the alcohol may annoy your cat.
- ❑ If the fluids are unusually cold or hot, they may be uncomfortable for your cat. Ideally, they should be given at about body temperature. However, most cats

tolerate them at room temperature just fine. Do not refrigerate the fluids. If you would like to warm them slightly, run warm water over the outside of the bag, being careful to not contaminate the drip set or needle with water. Do not heat the fluids in the microwave.

- ❑ As the fluids are running, a lump will form under the skin. Do not be alarmed; this is the pocket of fluid that will be absorbed over several hours. Sometimes gravity may cause the fluids to migrate downward under the skin of the front legs. This is normal and will not affect the absorption.
- ❑ There is no problem if a few bubbles of air are injected under the skin. If quite a bit of air gets under the skin, you may feel a “crackling” sensation when you push on the skin but no real harm will occur. The body will eventually absorb the air.
- ❑ The fluid in the bag should always be clear. If any cloudiness, discoloration, or floating particles occur, do not use the bag. This usually means that the fluids have become contaminated with bacteria. If you administer these fluids to your cat, a serious infection may occur under the skin.
- ❑ Sometimes the fluids will run slowly or even stop flowing if the end of the needle moves against the skin or underlying tissue. You do not usually need to remove the needle; rather gently reposition it under the skin until the fluids start to flow again.
- ❑ When you are finished giving fluids, you should close the lock firmly. However, this can crush the tubing so that the fluids will not flow well on the subsequent use. If this happens, move the lock to another place on the tubing and open the crushed area of the tube by pinching it with your fingers.