

Monitor Dogs' Stools, But Don't Obsess

Danger signs include tarry and black, or bright red.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have 3 dogs: a Dachshund, a Miniature Pinscher mix, and a Chihuahua-Rat Terrier mix. One of them, and I'm not sure which, has a stool that is dry and crumbling with white deposits that look like little rocks. None of my dogs is dehydrated, and when I first started seeing this stool, I honestly thought that some bad dog had been helping themselves to the litter box (I use a yellow, corn-based litter), but I no longer think that's the case. What could this possibly be? All three of my dogs eat lams, small and toy formula.

A. First of all, try not to worry too much about the appearance of your dog's stool: It could drive you crazy. You will note all colors, shapes, textures, and appearances if you spend enough time looking (monitoring occasionally is adequate).

However, there are a few important abnormalities to watch out for. If the stool is tarry black or bright red, there may be some intestinal or stomach bleeding. If the stool is liquid diarrhea, there may be a problem with the diet or possibly parasites in a young dog.

Secondly, do some simple detective work to identify the dog producing the abnormal stool. This could be important if there is evidence of bleeding or diarrhea.

Without any clinical signs – loss of appetite, vomiting, lethargy, for example – there is no reason to pursue any further testing. In addition, find a way to keep your dogs out of the litterbox, and away from other substances that may irritate their digestive systems.