

Hairballs

Hairballs are the number one cause of gastrointestinal problems caused by foreign material. The cat's tongue has a surface that acts like a comb. As they groom themselves, their saliva wets the fur. They then lick themselves dry catching dirt and loose hair. As they groom their coat, they pick up and swallow hair. The hair forms brownish tubelike wads. This results in a foreign body known as a bezoar. A bezoar is a mass formed in the stomach by compaction of repeatedly ingested material that does not pass into the intestine. The bezoar becomes too large to pass out of the stomach which can produce episodes of vomiting and symptoms that resemble chronic gastritis. Any hair that does pass into the colon can cause constipation.

Even though cats groom themselves, it is still important to brush your cat regularly. In essence, the more hair removed is less that can be swallowed, thus helping to prevent the formation of hairballs. Regular administrations of a hairball laxative, such as Laxatone, can help prevent the formation of hairballs and aid in their breakdown.