

Creature Comforts ~ Why Probiotics and Prebiotics for Animals

By Michal Smith

As we know there are two types of bacteria: harmful, or even deadly, and “friendly” or beneficial to an animal’s health.

“Friendly” bacteria such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Bifido-bacterium bifidum*, and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* are just a few of the helpful microorganisms that live in the intestinal tract where they help defend the body against disease and illness. Factors that affect the natural balance and cause the “friendly” bacteria to be outnumbered are: use of antibiotics; stress; an inadequate diet; a compromised immune system and the inhalation or ingestion of fertilizers, pesticides or other chemical pollutants.

The most common way that the ratio of friendly-to-harmful bacteria gets out of balance is through the use of antibiotics. The use of these drugs is not always avoidable, but unfortunately, antibiotics are not able to distinguish between friendly and harmful bacteria, so when eradicating harmful bacteria, they also kill off a large number of friendly bacteria which

leaves the animal with even less of a defense the next time he/she is exposed to harmful microorganisms.

Chemicals in the water supply and soil can have much the same effect. Even the natural event of aging can affect the balance of “friendly” and harmful bacteria in the intestinal tract. Common symptoms of imbalance are: gas, constipation, diarrhea, sluggishness, or skin problems. Regardless of the cause, if an animal shows any of the common signs of an unhealthy intestinal tract, consider intervention of a probiotic supplement to help get the intestinal ecosystem back on the right track and the animal feeling better.

Probiotics are dietary supplements made of different kinds of friendly bacteria. The ingredients in them may vary from brand to brand, as do the methods of delivery. For instance, probiotics may come in capsule, paste, liquid, powder or tablet form. They may even be included in some brands of food, although this is not considered the best source since, according to some studies, certain brands do not contain the amount or even the kind of probiotics that are stated on the labels. For this reason, supplements are considered the

more effective way to go.

Prebiotics are often mentioned alongside “probiotics.” Prebiotics are the energy source or food for the “friendly” bacteria that live in the intestinal tract. They help the beneficial bacteria thrive. Prebiotics are a specialized form of fiber that occurs naturally in foods such as chicory, asparagus, artichokes, garlic, honey, wheat and oats. One of the most common prebiotics is FOS or fructooligosaccharides. Creatures pet store carries a variety of pro/prebiotics for animals: ARK Naturals and Pet Naturals of Vermont both make a chew and a capsule for dogs and cats; Probiias is a great probiotic paste or powder for all animals including reptiles, birds and large farm animals such as goats, sheep and equine. Although this article is focused on animals, much about probiotics is the same for humans. Stores in Vernonia carry these supplements for us too!

Stop by the store 7 days a week for more information or discussion Monday-Friday 10-6; Saturday 10-5 and Sunday 12-4; 503-429-PETS(7387).

WOEC Current: Tree Trimming and Call Before You Dig

By Sarah Rossi

As Spring approaches it is a good time to talk about our WOEC tree trimming and right-of-way maintenance. The seasonal shift in March can trigger wind storms and other harsh weather patterns, which can create power outages. Last month’s snow and wind storms were a good example of how our increased tree trimming and line maintenance program is paying off. We only experienced several small outages with a few members off at any one time.

West Oregon Electric Cooperative has an aggressive tree trimming plan and vegetation management program in place to protect our lines and keep power flowing safely to your home. Our right-of-way (ROW) maintenance keeps tree limbs and other obstacles away from high voltage power lines, and it is an important service that we provide to you, our members. There are three main reasons that this ROW maintenance is so important: safety, reliability, and cost.

Our primary concern is the safety of our WOEC employees and WOEC members. Properly maintained ROW keeps our crews safe when they are restoring service and maintaining our system. Keeping trees away from power lines also keeps your family safe. We work hard to keep our lines clear, but we need our members to help us in that endeavor. Don’t plant trees or

tall vegetation under power lines, and be understanding when trees on your property may need to be trimmed back away from the lines. If you see a tree or tree limb that is touching or close to our lines please call our office and report it so that we can send someone out to evaluate if it is a danger tree or not.

When our crews work in well maintained areas, we can reduce the risks for employees and equipment which helps keep costs down. As a not-for-profit cooperative, WOEC strives to find ways to reduce costs and improve reliability for our members. Fewer and shorter outages save money for everyone! Maintaining our ROW is a priority for your safety and comfort.

Another important safety reminder for Spring is our “Call Before You Dig” number to request underground power line and other utility lines to be located and marked. Whether you are gardening, landscaping, doing a construction project, working on the honey-do lists, making road repairs, etc...if it evolves a shovel or big equipment, you need to call before you start to dig. Spring is a time of concern for us here as we inevitably incur outages from those who dig where our power lines are located. This creates a safety hazard and puts lives in jeopardy. It also causes additional work for our crews who have to drop everything to go repair the line and restore power to our affected members, and your neighbors don’t like

having their power out because someone forgot to make a call. All you need to remember is call 811 before you dig! The call will be directed to a Local One Call Center where personnel will notify affected utility companies, who will send crews to mark underground lines for free.

There is no cost to you to use this service, and it will save you money as there are penalties for not calling for a locate. The penalties for not calling beforehand are significant. The person causing the damage to underground facilities, (it is the same for telephone, gas, electric, cable), will be charged for

the repair of the facilities. They will also be subject to enforcement actions by the Oregon Public Utilities Commission and Civil penalties of up to \$1,000 for the first violation and up to \$5,000 for each subsequent violation. Civil penalties for intentional violations of the Oregon Excavation Law are up to \$5,000 for the first violation and up to \$10,000 for each subsequent violation.

So, let’s all be safe and call the 811 number before any digging around underground utility lines. It will end up saving us all a lot of time, money, and possible injuries.




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