

# A STRING OF ERRORS

If you saw your cat playing with a spool of thread, would your reaction be “Oh, how cute!”, or would you say “Good heavens, get that thread away from that cat before she swallows it!”

The second reaction is the right one -- letting a cat play with string can be a serious mistake. Once a cat begins swallowing the end of the string, she cannot extract it and continues to swallow. Soon there may be several feet of string “down the hatch.” The intestines try to pass the string along but cannot get a grip on it because it is so thin. They work harder and harder, until they may start telescoping on themselves, a painful experience that can require surgery to remedy. Surgery on the digestive organs can lead to peritonitis, an infection of the abdomen.

Cats are attracted to the movement of all types of string, thread, yarn, tinsel, ribbon, shoelaces, etc. If you are there to supervise the cat’s play, you can let him chase string safely, but do not leave him alone with it. Dogs do not chase string like cats do, but many would swallow string that has been used to tie a roast or turkey for cooking, and puppies may swallow anything they start chewing.

If you find that your pet has swallowed string, take it immediately to a veterinarian. If you see an end hanging from his mouth (or rear) do not try to pull it out. The pulling could cause the taut string to saw through an intestinal wall, possibly subjecting the animal to peritonitis.

Cats are playful pets -- protect yours by giving it toys that cannot be swallowed.

