

## Understanding the Types of Sleep Disorders in Animals

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### DESCRIPTION

Sleep is essential for all living organisms, and just like humans, animals too require sleep for maintaining their overall health and well-being. Sleep is not just a time of inactivity; it is a vital period where the body undergoes important processes, including cellular repair, memory consolidation, and energy restoration. However, animals, much like humans, can suffer from a variety of sleep disorders. These sleep diseases in animals can range from disturbances in their sleep patterns to more serious medical conditions that affect their overall quality of life. Understanding sleep disorders in animals is crucial for ensuring their health, especially in pets and working animals that are closely integrated into human life.

### Common sleep disorders in animals

**Insomnia:** Insomnia, a common sleep disorder in humans, can also affect animals. It refers to the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep, which can lead to fatigue, irritability, and reduced cognitive function. Insomnia in animals may be caused by factors such as stress, anxiety, pain, or changes in their environment. For example, dogs that experience separation anxiety often have difficulty settling down to sleep. Other animals, like horses, may experience insomnia if they are in unfamiliar surroundings or feel unsafe. Chronic insomnia in animals can lead to significant health problems, including weakened immune systems and behavioral issues. Veterinarians may address insomnia in animals by identifying the root cause, such as pain or anxiety, and treating it accordingly.

**Sleep apnea:** Sleep apnea is a disorder characterized by pauses in breathing during sleep. While it is often associated with humans, certain animals, particularly brachycephalic (short-nosed) breeds of dogs like Bulldogs and Pugs, are prone to sleep apnea. These breeds have a shortened airway due to their anatomy, making it difficult for them to breathe properly while sleeping. The intermittent cessation of breathing during sleep causes frequent awakenings, leading to poor quality rest. Sleep

apnea in animals can have serious consequences, such as cardiovascular issues and high blood pressure, due to the repeated drop in oxygen levels.

**Narcolepsy:** Narcolepsy is a neurological sleep disorder that affects the brain's ability to regulate sleep-wake cycles. Animals with narcolepsy experience sudden bouts of sleep, often during active periods. This condition has been documented in several species, including dogs, cats, and horses. Dogs, especially certain breeds like, are particularly prone to narcolepsy. Narcoleptic episodes in animals can be triggered by excitement, stress, or sudden changes in activity. While narcolepsy itself is not life-threatening, it can pose risks if the animal falls asleep in a dangerous situation, such as crossing a street or while standing on uneven terrain. Narcolepsy in animals is generally managed through lifestyle modifications, such as avoiding triggers and providing a safe environment during episodes.

**Restless leg syndrome:** Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) is a condition characterized by an uncontrollable urge to move the legs, typically occurring at rest or during sleep. Though more commonly associated with humans, RLS has been observed in animals, particularly in dogs. Animals with RLS may exhibit excessive movement during sleep, which can disrupt their rest and lead to sleep deprivation. In dogs, RLS may be linked to neurological or musculoskeletal conditions, as well as certain vitamin deficiencies. Treatment typically focuses on addressing any underlying conditions and ensuring the animal's comfort during sleep.

**Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep behavior disorder:** REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD) occurs when animals act out their dreams during the REM phase of sleep. This disorder has been observed in dogs, cats, and horses. Instead of experiencing the normal muscle paralysis that occurs during REM sleep, animals with RBD remain physically active and may run, jump, or engage in other behaviors as if they are chasing or being chased in a dream. RBD can be dangerous for animals, as they may inadvertently injure themselves or others during an episode.

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**Received:** 30-Jul-2024, Manuscript No. JSDT-24-34513; **Editor assigned:** 01-Aug-2024, PreQC No. JSDT-24-34513 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 15-Aug-2024, QC No. JSDT-24-34513; **Revised:** 22-Aug-2024, Manuscript No. JSDT-24-34513 (R); **Published:** 29-Aug-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2167-0277.24.13.577

**Citation:** Sion D (2024). Understanding the Types of Sleep Disorders in Animals. J Sleep Disord Ther. 13:577.

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The cause of RBD is not fully understood, but it is believed to be linked to neurological dysfunction. In some cases, medications used to treat human RBD, such as melatonin or certain anti-anxiety drugs, may be prescribed for animals.

**Hypersomnia:** Hypersomnia refers to excessive sleepiness or prolonged sleep durations. While many animals naturally sleep for long periods, hypersomnia becomes a concern when it is abnormal for the species or is accompanied by other symptoms such as lethargy, disinterest in activities, or weight loss. This disorder can be caused by a variety of factors, including infections, metabolic disorders, or heart disease. Hypersomnia can be managed by addressing the underlying health issues and adjusting the animal's sleep environment, ensuring it is comfortable and free from disturbances.

## CONCLUSION

Sleep disorders in animals are more common than one might think, and they can have significant impacts on an animal's health and quality of life. From insomnia to narcolepsy, these conditions require careful diagnosis and management by veterinarians. Understanding the root causes of sleep disorders in animals, whether they are genetic, neurological, or environmental, is essential for ensuring that animals receive the appropriate care and treatment. For pet owners and those working with animals, recognizing signs of sleep disorders and seeking veterinary advice early can help prevent complications and improve the well-being of the animals under their care.