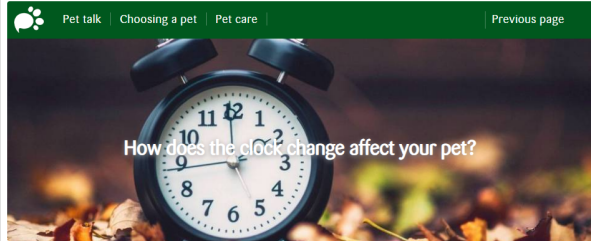


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Home Pet Talk Seasonal - How Does the Clock Affect Your Pet



How does the clock change affect your pet?

Just like us humans, cats, dogs and rabbits have an internal clock that tells them when they should eat, sleep and wake up. It's called a circadian rhythm and it's governed by sunlight. Changes to this biological process can explain why they may seem lazy in the winter months or more energetic in summer, as their exposure to natural light decreases and increases. It's one explanation if you think your pet has Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Changes in sunlight levels happen gradually throughout the year, but what about a sudden clock change that occurs overnight?

Clock changes

Forward an hour: end of March

Back an hour: end of October

Whilst an hour forward or back will have no direct effect on our pets – as they have no concept of time - it does change our schedule, and this is what we need to be aware of. We set our pets' routines by when we wake up, go to work, come back, take them for walks or let them out for exercise, and it's the hour shift in when these routines take place that can cause stress in our pets.



How are dogs affected by the clock change?

Dogs rely on routine - waking up, eating, going to the toilet, walks, you going out, you coming home, going to bed - there's a lot of mundane things you do which are incredibly important to your dog. When the clocks change, it's particularly vital to help dogs adjust by gradually changing wake up, meal, walk and bedtimes.

If your dog is having to wait an hour for food, or to be let out, or conversely is being woken up for a meal or walk, it can cause anxiety. Supporting your dog with wake up, toilet and

walk times is especially important, as dogs typically rely on you to let them out of a room or into the garden. If your dog is finding the changes in their daily routine particularly stressful there are [dog foods to help relaxation](#), but seek advice from your vet before any diet change.

How are cats affected by the clock change?

The ability to come and go as they please through cat flaps and use of a litter tray helps cats alleviate a lot of issues related to routine change. You should still help your cat adjust to the change through gradual alteration of meal, wake and sleep times. Remember that your cat will be up at its normal time for breakfast, so if you're an hour early, you'll disrupt their sleep cycle and if you're an hour late, the wait can cause anxiety.

How are rabbits affected by the clock change?

Rabbits and any pets kept outdoors or in a sunlit shed, will have a circadian rhythm that naturally adjusts to changes in sunlight throughout the year. They'll be able to do this much better than cats and dogs, (which are usually indoors and exposed to artificial light) even when it's dark outside. But when the clocks change, any variation in meal times or exercise time can cause anxiety.



What can you do to help your pet adjust?

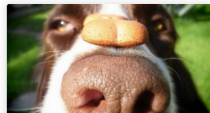
When the clocks change, it's all about routine changes for our pets. When they suddenly have to wait an extra hour for breakfast (clocks back) or their exercise time is an hour earlier than normal (clocks forward) they have difficulty internally understanding it. It can upset their rhythm, causing psychological and physiological stress.

We can help them by adjusting their routines gradually over a number of days running up to the clock change. Start around a week beforehand and adjust feed, walk and wake times by ten minutes each day. By the time the clocks change your pet will already be on the new routine, reducing any potential stress.

Granted, it's not great having to get up earlier than necessary, and you may not be able to feed your pet much later due to work, but any adjustment will help reduce any anxiety. As always, be patient with your pet and be there for your pet, and together you'll get through it.

If you have concerns over your pet's sensitivity to daylight savings time, you can take them to see one of our local [veterinary specialists](#) for advice and support.

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