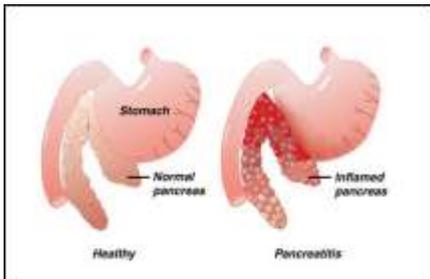




Pancreatitis



Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ in the abdomen near the stomach. It has two functions. It

produces hormones to control the amount of sugar in the body. One of these hormones is insulin. If the pancreas is not producing enough insulin, the pet will develop diabetes.

The second function of the pancreas is to produce digestive enzymes. These enzymes go into the intestine to digest the food your pet eats. If there aren't enough enzymes, a condition called pancreatic insufficiency develops.

The digestive enzymes are contained in tiny droplets. They break open when they are in the intestines to do their job of digestion. Think of them as time-released capsules that are only supposed to open in the intestines.

However, at times, they break open early and start to digest the pancreas itself. This causes inflammation and is what happens when your pet has pancreatitis. It can be severe enough to cause death.

Causes

Several things can cause pancreatitis. Eating fatty foods can trigger it in dogs. This doesn't usually happen in cats. Trauma such as being hit by a car, an infection, and some drugs can all be possible causes. However, in most cases, we don't know what the cause is.

Miniature Schnauzers seem to be more prone to it and some studies have indicated other breeds may be more susceptible including Yorkshire Terriers, Cocker Spaniels, Dachshunds, Poodles, and sled dogs.

Signs

Pets with pancreatitis are sick. They don't want to eat and are lethargic. They may be dehydrated. Dogs are often vomiting and usually have pain in their belly.



They often show the pain with a hunched back or by stretching out the front legs while keeping their butt in the air. This is called the "praying position".

Cats usually don't vomit and don't have obvious pain.

Diagnosing pancreatitis can be a challenge. The signs that pets show can be the same for many diseases. Blood tests show signs of the inflammation but don't usually pinpoint the pancreas as the primary problem. X-rays won't diagnosis pancreatitis but can be used to look for other causes of the same signs. Ultrasound can be helpful.



The only way to know for sure if your pet has pancreatitis is by taking a biopsy of the pancreas. However, we would rarely do this in a sick pet. Many times veterinarians will assume the pet has pancreatitis and treat it accordingly.

Treatment

Treatment starts with hospitalization on IV fluids. The pet is fasted so the pancreas can “rest” and heal itself. Pets are treated for pain and medicine for vomiting is given if needed. Antibiotics may be given to prevent complications.

Pets can have recurring bouts of pancreatitis. This can lead to fibrosis (like scar tissue) building up in the pancreas. If this happens, it is then called chronic pancreatitis. Pets with this condition can develop diabetes.

Summary

Pancreatitis can be a life-threatening disease. If your pet is acting sicker than usual, see a veterinarian right away. Don't feed fatty foods to your dog. If your pet has had pancreatitis, a low-fat diet may prevent a recurrence.