



Canine Pancreatitis

Pancreatitis is a condition that is commonly diagnosed in dogs and is due to inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas is situated alongside the stomach and small intestine. It has two functions; firstly it stores digestive enzymes which are released into the small intestine and, secondly, it produces insulin which regulates the dog's blood sugar level.

The underlying cause of pancreatitis is often not clear; it can be linked to vomiting, inflammatory bowel disease and can be seen as a direct result of a fatty meal such as stealing human food high in fat.

Clinical signs can be non specific and the dog can present lethargic, inappetent and with weight loss. There are often gastrointestinal signs such as vomiting and diarrhoea. In severe cases the dog can go into shock and organ function can be affected.

Diagnosis is based on a combination of blood samples and ultrasound scan of the pancreas and gastrointestinal tract.

Treatment is to provide supportive care, giving the patient time to allow the inflammation of the pancreas to resolve. This can take from a couple of days to weeks in more chronic cases. Most cases require pain relief and anti-sickness medication and in severe cases, the dog may need to be hospitalised for intravenous fluids and supportive injectable medication. It is important that these patients eat once vomiting has stopped to get protein into the body to aid healing. Their diet needs to be low fat to reduce stimulation of the pancreas.

In some cases, once the pancreatic inflammation has resolved the animal will not suffer from further recurrences, but in other cases it can become a chronic condition and may need long term medication and dietary management.