



Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a condition affecting the stomach and small intestine, it occurs in both dogs and cats. This is a chronic condition and is caused by intolerance to dietary proteins and sometimes carbohydrates. The stomach and intestine wall become thickened due to inflammation triggered by food substances and leads to impaired function.

IBD in animals leads to chronic vomiting and diarrhoea, if the stomach is solely affected you may have vomiting without diarrhoea. The majority of cases will involve both the stomach and small intestine. Some animals will lose weight due to the poor absorption from the affected stomach and intestine. Animals can also be seen to have an increased appetite to maintain their calorific intake whilst others are inappetent and show signs of malaise due to abdominal pain. Severe cases can have greatly reduced blood proteins due to loss from the gut and poor absorption, this can lead to fluid accumulation in the abdomen known as ascites.

Diagnosis involves blood tests, faecal samples, xrays and ultrasound examination of the abdomen. A definitive diagnosis is made by taking biopsies of the stomach and intestine wall, this can be done by endoscope.

Treatment often involves a combination of medications and an elimination diet. Medications include anti-acid drugs to reduce irritation caused by stomach acid, antibiotics to modify levels of normal intestinal bacteria, steroids/immunosuppressant drugs can be used to reduce the immune reaction of the stomach and intestine to the food substance. Diet is the most important treatment, the diet must be hypo or low allergenic and ideally contains a protein source that has not been fed to the animal before. In some cases once controlled the patient can be maintained on diet alone.