



Canine Pancreatitis

Role of the pancreas

The pancreas is an abdominal organ which is involved in **digestion** and regulation of the **blood sugar level**. Enzymes are released from the pancreas which enter the digestive system and help with absorption of dietary nutrients, vitamins and minerals. Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. This occurs when enzymes released from the pancreas act on the pancreas itself. This causes pancreatic damage, the organs surrounding the pancreas can also become inflamed.

The initiating cause of pancreatitis is often unknown however it has been associated with ingestion of a fatty meal. Dogs usually have very rapid onset of pancreatitis and become unwell quickly however, it is possible for it to present as a more long term problem.



Clinical Signs

- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Lethargy
- Inappetance
- Diarrhoea



This 'prayer' position can indicate abdominal pain



Diagnosis of Pancreatitis

The signs of pancreatitis are quite vague and non-specific therefore ruling out other causes of abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea is important. Other common causes of this presentation are ingestion of a foreign body, infection/inflammation of the intestines and other organs acting on the digestive tract. A generalised blood test to look for any indication of other organ involvement is often the first step. There is a specific test for pancreatitis which can be done in the laboratory at Hawthorne Lodge. Your vet may also suggest either a ultrasound scan of the abdomen or an xray to look for a foreign body and assess the pancreas.

Treatment

This depends on the severity of the clinical signs can how long they have been present. Dogs may be treated as home if the condition is not and doesn't require fluids.

- Anti-sickness injection
- Restricting food for 12-24 hours only - it is important to keep feeding animals through this condition as the cells of the intestinal tract need energy to function and this is provided via food from the gut
- Fluids via a drip - this is given if dehydration has developed
- Pain relief
- Antibiotics - there is rarely a bacterial infection in pancreatitis but if this is suspected antibiotics will be given

Canine pancreatitis can often recurr. As mentioned previously the initiating cause is not fully understood. There is evidence that a low fat diet and ensuring optimum body weight are factors which reduce the risk of recurrence.

