

Hillcrest E-Newsletter

April 2010

Pancreatitis is a potentially fatal disease.

- It is most common in dogs.
- It can be very difficult to diagnose.
- Symptoms can include vomiting, loss of appetite and abdominal pain.
- There are two types of pancreatitis:

● Chronic

● Acute

Hello everybody! Spring has finally sprung! I didn't think we would ever see green grass again but I think it's here to stay. I hope you learned something last month about the microchip and how important it is for your pet to be identified if it gets lost. If you have any questions or would like to set up an appointment to have a chip implanted, please call us today. This month we are going to talk about our vet assistant/receptionist's idea of canine/feline pancreatitis. Pancreatitis is a fairly common ailment we see here at the clinic and one that the normal person might not know much about until it happens to your pet.

What is the pancreas?

As soon as you give your pet a treat your pet will chew it up into a slurry and then swallow it. It then goes down the esophagus into the stomach where enzymes begin breaking down the protein. When the food particles are small enough it goes into the duodenum, the part of the small intestine that is attached to the stomach, and where it is further digested. There are two ducts that are attached to the duodenum near where the stomach contents enter. One duct is for bile that is squirted into directly from the gall

bladder and the other duct is the pancreatic duct, which squirts more digestive enzymes to break down starches and more protein.

The pancreas is a pink glandular organ that is located just under the stomach and along the duodenum. The pancreas has two main jobs; the first is the secretion of digestive enzymes to break down food and the second is secretion of insulin and glucagons, which regulates sugar metabolism.

What is pancreatitis?

Pancreatitis occurs when inflammation disrupts the normal integrity of the pancreas. Digestive enzymes that are normally stored in granules in the pancreas are released prematurely, while still in the pancreas. The result of this is a metabolic catastrophe! The tissue then becomes further inflamed and the tissue damage then spreads into the liver. Toxins from this tissue destruction are then released into the circulation and can cause a body-wide inflammatory response. Some of the disruptions could be:

- Diabetes mellitus- the pancreas is inflamed therefore disrupting its ability to produce insulin. This can either be permanent or temporary.
- Respiratory failure- the surfactants in the lung tissue that normally keep the tiny air-filled alveoli from collapsing after each exhaled breath are disrupted and without surfactants, the alveoli close up and causes respiratory failure.
- Weber-Christian syndrome- fats in the body are disrupted and destroyed as a result.
- Disseminated intravascular coagulation- this is a disruption of normal blood clotting and clot dissolving mechanisms. This leads to abnormal simultaneous bleeding and clotting throughout the body.
- Pancreatic encephalopathy (brain damage)- in severe cases the fats protecting the central nervous system become digested causing brain damage.

The good news is that most commonly the inflammation is contained within the liver and pancreas, but that is very painful and life threatening.

What causes pancreatitis?

We know that pancreatitis is an inflammatory condition of the pancreas, but what causes it? In humans the most common causes are alcohol consumption

and gall stones, however these are rare (hopefully) causes in our pets. Actually the most common causes are dietary indiscretion and less commonly- trauma to the abdomen. We obviously try and avoid blunt trauma to our pet's abdomen but sometimes forget what dietary indiscretion is. We assume that our pets will enjoy the same variety of foods and diet changes that we do- however this is not the case. Any sudden change in the diet can cause the inflammatory response we know as pancreatitis. Certainly fatty foods are worse, but again any sudden change can be detrimental- even non food items (matchbox cars, Star Wars figures) can confuse the pancreas into thinking it needs to digest them. The more times pancreatitis occurs in your pet the possibility for more chronic changes and even irreversible damage increases- so be careful when offering table foods or even switching dog foods... and keep your trash and food scraps away from your pet's reach!

How do you diagnose pancreatitis?

Diagnosis of pancreatitis is fairly difficult. The signs are pretty classic though, and include appetite loss, vomiting, diarrhea, painful abdomen and fever.

- Blood work- the main way to diagnose is through blood work. Increased blood levels of amylase and lipase (two pancreatic enzymes) are usually a good indication. The problem is these enzymes can elevate with increase corticosteroid use, kidney disease or dehydration.
- X-rays- in about 24% of the cases pancreatitis can be diagnosed through an x-ray. Radiographs can show a widening of the angle of the duodenum against the stomach, which indicates swelling of the pancreas.
- Ultrasound- in about 68% of the cases pancreatitis can be diagnosed with ultrasound. It also provides the opportunity to view other organs.
- Surgical exploration- is the only way to make a 100% diagnosis. Usually this method is not used unless surgical exploration is necessary to remove a foreign object.

How do you treat pancreatitis?

- No food/water- the passage of food through the duodenum is a strong stimulus for the pancreas and the pancreas needs to rest for at least 24 hours.
- IV fluid support- an animal with pancreatitis will need at least 24 hours of hospital care with IV fluids, to prevent further dehydration, and blood test monitoring.
- Pain medication- pancreatitis is extremely painful to the animal due to the liver and pancreas being inflamed. IV pain medication is administered along with anti-nausea medication and antibiotics.
- Low fat diet- once the animal can eat; a low fat diet is needed to minimize pancreatic stimulation.

Dr. Tidbit by Dr. Kelley J.Owen:

One of the best things we can do for our dogs and cats is measure their food every day. It is best to use a measuring cup (a 1/3 cup or 1/2 cup). We should start when our pets are puppies and kittens and pre-determine an amount to feed every day. It has been shown in humans, people that plan their meals are less likely to be overweight- let's do the same for our "best friends."

ADOPTIONS:

I am happy to report that Lucy (aka Shiver or now Rory) got adopted! I would like to thank Cindy Horner and family for adopting this sweet little girl.



This month we have a beautiful Siamese mix female medium-haired kitty. She is around 2-3 years old and is spayed, de wormed, vaccinated and ready to go. She will make someone a wonderful companion!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ✓ I am happy to report that we raised \$460 for our C.A.N.S project Saturday March 6th at our pet photography day. Thank you for all who participated; it sure was a lot of fun. We will be doing it again soon, so if you missed out this time stayed tuned!
- ✓ We found a prescription pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses in the parking lot. If you are missing a pair, please give us a call!
- ✓ We will be having a special on send out fecal examinations for 2 weeks in April. We send the fecal to an outside laboratory and they spin it down and check for all internal parasites and Giardia. From April 12th to April 24th you can get this fecal for only \$10! If you would like to drop off your pets fecal we would be glad to send it out and call you with the results.
- ✓ This month we have the Annual Cash Bash on Saturday April 24th at 6:00 p.m. The doors open at 5:30 p.m at the Elks Lodge on Chestnut Ridge Road. The cost is \$25/per person and this includes food and drinks. Every 15 minutes \$200 will be given away and the grand prize is \$1000, which will be drawn at 9:00 p.m. All proceeds will support the Animal Friends No-Kill Animal Sanctuary. Tickets are available at Lucky's Attic, Woofs, and Hillcrest Veterinary Clinic or by calling 290-1010 or 282-4052. Please come out and support a good cause!

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:



This month we are featuring our receptionist/veterinary assistant, Emily. "I moved to Morgantown from Wellsburg, West Virginia where I grew up. I've lived here for almost six years while attending school and working. I'm currently pursuing a degree in veterinary technology. I live with two pets: Amanda, a female Doberman mix I adopted from the Monongalia county Canine Adoption Center in June 2007 and Nicky, a male purebred Siamese cat who was found as a stray in September 2008. Say 'hi' to me next time you stop in!"

That is all we have for this month. Please call us if you have any questions about pancreatitis or the send out fecal special we are having this month!