

Pancreatitis

What is Pancreatitis?

Pancreatitis means inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ located near the stomach. It has two main jobs: releasing digestive enzymes to break down food and to secrete insulin.

Pancreatitis can be acute or chronic, mild or severe. It causes widespread inflammation and can be very painful & even life-threatening.

What are the Symptoms?

The classical signs of pancreatitis are:

- loss of appetite
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- painful abdomen
- fever

Abdominal pain may be shown by restlessness, a hunched appearance, not wanting to move or whimpering.

Diagnosing Pancreatitis

Amylase and Lipase are pancreatic enzymes that can be measured with a blood test. Unfortunately, the test does not find all cases of pancreatitis—50% of dogs with pancreatitis will not have elevated enzymes. A newer test called PLI (pancreatic lipase immunoreactivity) test can be helpful in diagnosing pancreatitis in dogs whose pancreatic enzymes are in normal range.

Treating Acute Pancreatitis

Acute pancreatitis can be extremely painful and cause many secondary problems including dehydration, electrolyte / acid-base imbalances, infections and life-threatening DIC.

Withholding food and water is an important component of treatment because it allows the pancreas “to rest” and stop the inflammatory process.

Hospitalization is often required with moderate to severe cases of pancreatitis in order to administer IV fluids and medications and provide the appropriate intensive treatment and monitoring.

At Countrycare Animal Complex, we also utilize herbal enema therapy specifically designed for pancreatitis. We have found that these herbal treatments dramatically improve the treatment outcome.

Chronic Pancreatitis

Chronic pancreatitis refers to a smoldering, low-grade inflammation of the pancreas. Symptoms such as vomiting and discomfort after eating may occur intermittently. One may also see depression, a loss of appetite or weight loss.

Signs may be subtle and nonspecific such as a ‘picky eater’, skipping meals or lack of interest in playing. Chronic pancreatitis may also flare up with episodes of acute pancreatitis. Because chronic pancreatitis symptoms are non specific, this condition is not as readily diagnosed, however, it is quite common.

Causes of Pancreatitis

In most cases, we never find out the specific cause, however there are things that can predispose to pancreatitis:

1. Dietary indiscretion—such as eating fatty scraps of human foods. This may be foods obtained from the garbage or fed by the owner. Examples include high fat gravy, meat scraps etc.
2. Hormonal imbalances such as diabetes, hypothyroidism and Cushing’s disease.
3. Certain medications such as sulfa antibiotics, potassium bromide or some chemotherapy agents.
4. Any dog or cat can get pancreatitis, but middle aged, overweight and inactive dogs have been shown to be more prone to pancreatitis.
5. Some breeds of dogs are predisposed to pancreatitis.
6. Studies show a connection between dogs with IBD (inflammatory bowel disease), food allergies and pancreatitis.
7. Other miscellaneous causes include trauma to the pancreas, infections or pancreatic tumors.

Pancreatitis is a very common and often very devastating disease. Prevention includes careful selection control of your pet’s diet, diagnosing and treating any underlying problems (such as thyroid, etc.) and keeping your pet fit and trim. Please call our office to discuss your pet’s specific medical condition.