



HAEMOBARTONELLOSIS

What is Haemobartonellosis?

It is a disease caused by rickettsial parasites that attach to the external surface of red blood cells (Haemobartonella). It can cause red blood cell destruction and anemia because of parasite attachment and also because of the resulting immune response by the cat or dog against its red blood cells. It occurs mostly in adult animals, and in cats, it is more common in males.

How Did My Pet Catch It?

Haemobartonella felis (cats) and *Haemobartonella canis* (dogs) are blood infection organisms whose mode of transmission is not fully understood. Ticks or other bloodsucking arthropods may serve as intermediate hosts or vectors to spread the disease.

FeLV-infected cats (feline leukemia virus) show a greater severity of anemia, and the likelihood of severe anemia is greatly increased in dogs with splenectomy or spleen pathology.

What are the Symptoms of Haemobartonella?

In cats the disease will vary in severity ranging from inapparent infection to marked depression and death. Signs may include intermittent fever during the initial acute phase, followed by depression, weakness, anorexia, weight loss, pale mucous membranes, enlarged spleen, and icterus (yellow skin and whites of the eyes).

Dogs show mild or inapparent signs (e.g., pale mucous membranes and listlessness).

How is It Diagnosed?

The history, age, and symptoms may be suggestive of the disease. A blood test is useful to confirm the disease.

How is It Treated?

Without therapy, 30% of cats will succumb. Most patients can be treated as outpatients at home, unless severely anemic or extremely sick. Cats can remain carriers even after completion of treatment, but relapse is uncommon.

Tetracycline antibiotics are usually given for 2-3 weeks. Cortisones can be helpful in some cases. Blood transfusions and intravenous fluids may be needed as well.

Your pet will probably need to have a simple blood test for anemia repeated after about a week of treatment to determine the state of red blood cell production and maintenance.

Call Us If...

- Your pet shows any sign of hemorrhage or jaundice (yellow skin).
- Your pet takes a downturn in general health.
- Your pet loses its appetite.

Special instructions: _____

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!

Haemobartonella felis on red blood cells

