



## MASTITIS

### What is Mastitis?

Bacterial infection of one or more lactating mammary glands of the nursing mother dog or cat is called mastitis. It develops because of ascending infection up the milk ducts, trauma to the gland, or through the bloodstream. It is potentially a life-threatening infection that may lead to septic shock (“blood poisoning”).

### What are the Symptoms of Mastitis?

The mother often shows signs of loss of appetite, lethargy, neglect of puppies or kittens, and failure of puppies or kittens to thrive (they are often restless and cry frequently). On examination the mammary gland(s) will be firm, swollen, warm, and painful. Often pus or bloody fluid can be expressed from the involved gland. Fever, dehydration, and septic shock may be present. Abscessation or gangrene of gland(s) often follows (sometimes in spite of treatments too).

Examination of the milk or discharge can confirm the suspected diagnosis. Sometimes bacterial culture of the causing organisms will be helpful in deciding the best treatment.

### How is Mastitis Treated?

Usually the pet needs to be treated as inpatient (hospitalized) until it is stable. Puppies and kittens usually will have to be hand raised or placed on healthy surrogate mother. In selected patients, the young may be allowed to continue nursing, with special attention paid to antibiotics used and weight gain of them.

Abscessed or gangrenous glands require surgical attention. IV fluid therapy is often required at first with treatment for electrolyte imbalances, hypoglycemia, and shock (if indicated). Systemic antibiotics are needed. Sometimes the gland can be infused with a mild iodine solution as well. Warm compresses and milking out the affected glands several times daily is usually needed.

Possible complications may include: abscessation or gangrene that can cause loss of the gland(s), and hand raising of the puppies or kittens requires considerable commitment by the owner.

### Will My Pet Be OK?

The prognosis is usually good with treatment once the pet is out of the life-threatening period.

### Special Instructions:

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#### Call Us If...

- Your pet loses its appetite or seems very tired.
- You notice any degradation in your pet’s general health.
- There seems to be a relapse in the condition of the affected gland(s).
- You have trouble giving the prescribed medicine.

*Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!*