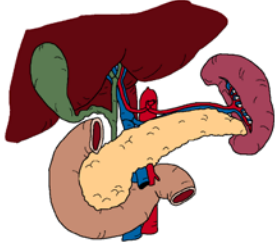




PANCREATITIS

What Does the Pancreas Do?



The pancreas produces hormones, such as insulin (which regulates sugar metabolism), and enzymes that allow the body to digest food. The pancreas is an essential body organ and cannot be removed.

What is Pancreatitis? - Pancreatitis is an inflammation of the pancreas. It is unknown what exactly causes pancreatitis. It is known that the animal most likely to get pancreatitis is an overweight, middle-aged, female house dog that has been fed a diet high in fat or protein, such as table scraps, pork, bones, etc. Cats do suffer from pancreatitis, but less frequently than dogs.

Pancreatitis may be fatal. It may also become a chronic, recurring condition which can lead to other diseases such as diabetes and liver disease. When the pancreas is inflamed, pancreatic tissue is destroyed by its own activated digestive enzymes, which can lead to a decreased production of insulin and the resulting diabetes. In addition, these enzymes leak from the damaged pancreas and cause destruction of the nearby body tissues. This tissue destruction is very painful and often leads to severe infections and deep shock. In response to this area of major inflammation, the blood may lose its ability to clot, resulting in uncontrolled bleeding. Often abnormalities will occur in the stomach, intestines, liver, lungs, heart, and kidneys as well. Death can occur suddenly, or be a slow, painful process.

What Are the Symptoms of Pancreatitis? - The signs of pancreatitis include lethargy/depression, restlessness, depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, abdominal pain, and sometimes diarrhea. Breed predilections include female miniature schnauzer, miniature poodles, cocker spaniels, and Siamese cats.

How is It Diagnosed? - The physical examination may show severe lethargy in both cats and dogs.

Dehydration is commonly seen. Abdominal pain and fluid distended bowel loops may be present. Fever is common in dogs; but fever or hypothermia may be seen in cats. Jaundice is more common in cats than dogs.

Less common abnormalities include respiratory distress, bleeding disorders, and cardiac arrhythmias. An exact diagnosis may be difficult, often the animal is treated symptomatically, based on the clinical signs. Abdominal radiographs do not often show inflammation around the pancreas, but are helpful to rule out other problems. Blood tests may give an indication that pancreatitis is occurring and are very helpful in managing the patients treatment, but an exact diagnosis may not be obtained. Ultrasound examinations may identify an abscessed pancreas.

How is It Treated? - To enable the pancreas to heal, no food, water, or medications will be given by mouth for at least 24 to 48 hours. The treatment of an animal with pancreatitis includes intravenous fluids, antibiotics, and intensive monitoring in a veterinary hospital. When the animal is able to eat again, it is fed a low-fat diet. In some cases, the animal may have to remain on a low-fat diet the rest of its life. Special prescription diets are available at veterinary offices, if needed. To prevent a recurrence, your pet should be fed only the foods specified by the veterinarian.

Could It Have Been Prevented? - To decrease the chances of your pet getting pancreatitis, do not feed it table food. Pancreatitis is often an avoidable problem that the owner can control through careful feeding.

Call Us If...

- Your pet has diarrhea or vomiting.
- Your pet's health worsens or it loses weight.
- You have trouble giving the prescribed medicine.
- Your pet loses its appetite or seems very depressed.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!