Gastroenteritis in Dogs

We have seen a large number of gastroenteritis cases in dogs, over the last few weeks. These dogs have presented with a combination of vomiting, inappetence, some had diarrhoea, and most were becoming dehydrated.

Gastroenteritis is one of the most common conditions we see, and refers to non-specific inflammtion of the gastrointestinal tract (stomach, intestines). This inflammation can lead to abdominal discomfort, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite and/or lethargy. Clinal signs can appear suddenly and may persist for a few days.

Common causes of gastrointestinal disease in dogs include dietary indiscretion, changes to normal diet, infections (bacterial, viral, parasitic), toxins, or taking certain medications, amongst other things.

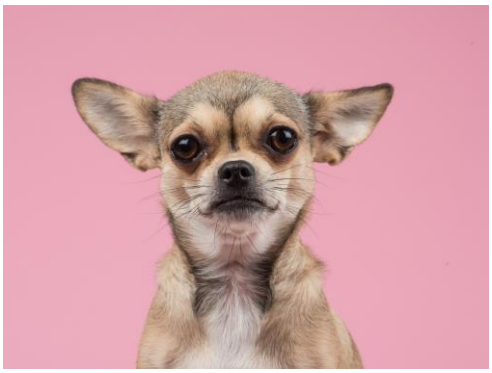
Gastroenteritis can be highly contagious can spread through the dog community quickly. Viruses can be passed through saliva, vomit and faeces. The virus can be directly passes from dog to dog, or drinking from shared water bowls etc. If your dog has developed any of these symptoms, it is important to isolate them to stop infectious gastroenteritis spreading further.

Dogs suffering from gastroenteritis often present dehydrated as they lose fluids through vomiting or diarrhoea, and are unable to drink and eat enough to make up for these losses. The severity of gastroenteritis dictates whether outpatient treatment is acceptable or if the animal needs to be admitted to hospital for more aggressive management.

The diagnosis is typically made based on a dog's history, physical examination findings and by excluding other potential causes of vomiting or diarrhoea. In a lot of cases, a specific underlying cause may not be identified, but patients usually respond to supportive care.

Diagnosis of gastroenteritis

A diagnosis of gastroenteritis is usually made by excluding other potential causes of vomiting and diarrhoea. Common diagnostic tests include:



* Blood tests (complete blood count and chemistry panel) to assess for dehydration and screen for other organ involvement.

* Faecal analysis: to tests for infectious causes (parasites, parvovirus).

* Urinalysis: to screen for kidney disease, urinary tract infections and certain endocrine diseases (diabetes).

* Abdominal radiographs: to visualise foreign material and assess for possible obstruction.

* Abdominal ultrasound: to assess organs within the abdominal cavity, look for potential foreign objects that may be causing clincial signs.

Treatment of Gastroenteritis

Treatment of gastroenteritis often involves supportive care using a combination of anti-nausea medication, intravenous fluids to rehydrate the patient, pain relief, a bland diet for a few days, probiotics, and activity restriction until clincial signs abate.

If they are unwell of showing any of the above signs then we recommend making an appointment with one of our experienced vets as soon as possible.

Dr Polina

Vet HQ Double Bay