

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Basics

OVERVIEW

- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a condition characterized by long-term (chronic) intermittent signs of abnormal function of the large intestines (colon), in the absence of structural gastrointestinal disease
- "Gastro-" refers to stomach; "intestinal" refers to the intestines
- "Bowel" refers to the intestines

SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION OF PET

Species

- Dogs—uncommon
- Cats—rare

Breed Predispositions

- Any breed; especially working dogs or individual dogs considered to be more susceptible to stress (with anxious temperaments)

SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES IN THE PET

- Long-term (chronic), intermittent signs of large-bowel diarrhea, including frequent passage of small amounts of bowel movement (feces) with possible blood and mucus, difficulty defecating (known as "dyschezia"), and/or constipation
- Abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, and nausea may occur
- Physical examination is often unremarkable

CAUSES

- Unknown

RISK FACTORS

- Stress (such as changes in the household, change of diet, separation anxiety) may be associated with episodes of diarrhea
- In many dogs, stress appears to play no role

Treatment

HEALTH CARE

- Outpatient medical management



ACTIVITY

- Increased routine physical activity may reduce stress levels and may encourage more normal function of the large intestines (colon)

DIET

- A highly digestible diet with added blend of soluble fiber and insoluble fiber often improves diarrhea (psyllium or wheat dextrin for example)
- If increased soluble fiber is not beneficial, the veterinarian may recommend increasing insoluble fiber in the diet
- Either soluble or insoluble fiber supplementation may result in variable improvement of clinical signs

Medications

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive

- Drug therapy may range from several days to life long
- Librax—antispasmodic-tranquilizer combination; contains chlordiazepoxide and clidinium bromide; most cases of IBS probably involve increased motility of the gastrointestinal tract (known as "hypermotility" or "spasmodic" intestines); Librax decreases the intestinal spasms and decreases anxiety; frequently used as first choice drug
- Gabapentin for possible pain

INTESTINAL MOTILITY MODIFIERS

- Opiate antidiarrheals improve signs by increasing rhythmic segmentation in the intestines
- Loperamide (Imodium®)
- Diphenoxylate (Lomotil®)
- Cisapride if mostly constipation signs noted

ANTISPASMODIC–TRANQUILIZER COMBINATIONS

- Used to relieve abdominal cramping, bloating, and distress
- Chlordiazepoxide and clidinium bromide (Librax®)
- Clidinium bromide
- Isopropamide and prochlorperazine (Darbazine®)
- Aminopentamide (Centrine®)

MEDICATIONS TO CONTROL NAUSEA AND VOMITING ADMINISTERED BY INJECTION (KNOWN AS "PARENTERAL ANTIEMETICS")

- If nausea and vomiting preclude administering medication by mouth, the veterinarian will administer antiemetics by injection for 1–2 days
- Maropitant (Cerenia®)
- Prochlorperazine (Compazine®)
- Ramosetron; experimental in dogs

Follow-Up Care

PATIENT MONITORING

- Monitor stool consistency and watch for signs of constipation, diarrhea, difficulty defecating (dyschezia) and abdominal discomfort—call your pet's veterinarian if you observe changes in stool consistency or any signs of problems

PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE

- Minimize any stressful factors in the pet's environment that might precipitate an episode

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Should see improved stools, decreased mucus, and relief of difficulty defecating (dyschezia) and abdominal

distress within 1–2 days of starting medication

- In some dogs, signs completely resolve following treatment and dietary alterations; others have long-term episodic signs

Key Points

- Response to treatment varies and affected dogs may have long-term, intermittent clinical signs
- Eliminate any stressful factors in the dog's environment, if possible

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