

Non-specific gastrointestinal signs in dogs – Consider chronic pancreatitis

Chronic pancreatitis is not uncommon in dogs. It often goes unrecognised because it can produce intermittent, mild gastrointestinal signs or subclinical disease. Further, laboratory tests are not sensitive, and chronic pancreatitis may be masked or accompanied by concurrent hepatobiliary or intestinal disease.

Clinical signs often include vomiting, reduced appetite and lethargy, with diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever seen occasionally.

Changes in the routine biochemistry usually includes an elevated ALP and sometimes increases in cholesterol, ALT, bilirubin, albumin, glucose and/or urea. Some of these findings may be due to dehydration rather than a direct effect of pancreatic inflammation. Both the DGGR method for total lipase and pancreatic specific lipase (cPL) show low sensitivities in dogs with chronic pancreatitis. Thirty- 60% of dogs with the condition do not show elevations in these enzymes (Bostrom *et. al.* 2013, Goodband *et. al.* 2016).

A definitive diagnosis of chronic pancreatitis requires pancreatic biopsy, a procedure that is uncommonly carried out for non-specific gastrointestinal signs. Consequently, it is usually a diagnosis of exclusion after other causes of gastrointestinal dysfunction have been ruled out.

References:

Bostrom BM, Xenoulis PG, Newman *et. al.* Chronic pancreatitis in dogs: A retrospective study of clinical, clinicopathological, and histopathological findings in 61 cases. *The Veterinary Journal*, 195(1), 73–9, 2013.

Goodband E, Williams T, Casas FC *et al.* Investigation of sensitivity and specificity of DGGR lipase for diagnosis of acute and chronic pancreatitis in dogs. *Proceedings from the British Small Animal Veterinary Congress 2016*

