



MANAGEMENT OF CUSHING'S DISEASE IN DOGS

CUSHING'S DISEASE - OR 'HYPERADRENOCORTICISM' MEANS THAT YOUR DOG'S ADRENAL GLANDS ARE PRODUCING TOO MUCH CORTISOL (STEROID HORMONE). EXCESSIVE STEROID PRODUCTION LEADS TO A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS INCLUDING INCREASED DRINKING, URINATING AND EATING, SKIN AND COAT CHANGES, LIVER ENLARGEMENT AND BLOATING OF THE BELLY. IF LEFT UNTREATED, THE SIGNS OF CUSHING'S DISEASE WILL GET WORSE AND OVER 50% OF DOGS WILL DEVELOP HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE WHICH CAN CAUSE EYE, HEART AND KIDNEY PROBLEMS.

CUSHING'S DISEASE IS MOST OFTEN CAUSED BY THE PITUITARY GLAND IN THE BRAIN (>80% OF CASES) AND IS TREATED BY ONCE DAILY LIFELONG ORAL TABLETS. HOWEVER, SOME CASES (15-20%) OF CUSHING'S DISEASE ARE CAUSED BY TUMOURS OF THE ADRENAL GLAND AND MAY BE TREATED BY SURGERY. THIS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH YOUR VETERINARY SURGEON.

TREATMENT USUALLY CONSISTS OF VETORYL TABLETS, GIVEN AT THE SAME TIME EACH DAY, PREFERABLY IN THE MORNINGS. THE CAPSULES SHOULD NOT BE DIVIDED OR OPENED AND CAN BE GIVEN WITH OR WITHOUT FOOD, BUT THIS SHOULD NOT BE VARIED FROM DAY TO DAY.

CHECK UPS

TREATMENT FOR CUSHING'S DISEASE IN DOGS IS VERY SPECIFIC FOR EACH DOG SO REGULAR CHECK UPS ARE NECESSARY TO MONITOR IMPROVEMENT TO TREATMENT AS WELL AS CHECKING LEVELS OF STEROID HORMONE IN THE BLOOD TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE WITHIN THE CORRECT RANGES. THE MEDICATION CAN HAVE SIDE EFFECTS IN 10-15% OF DOGS; THIS CAN BE DUE TO OVERDOSING THE DRUG, REACTIONS TO THE DRUG ITSELF OR UNMASKING OF OTHER DISEASES SUCH AS KIDNEY DISEASE OR ARTHRITIS.

DOGS WITH CUSHING'S DISEASE ARE ALSO MORE PRONE TO URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS, DIABETES, KIDNEY PROBLEMS AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE WHICH SHOULD BE REGULARLY MONITORED AND ADDITIONAL TREATMENTS MAY BE REQUIRED.

WE RECOMMEND THAT ALL CUSHINGOID DOGS ARE SEEN BETWEEN 10-14 DAYS AFTER STARTING TREATMENT FOR A HEALTH CHECK AND REPEAT BLOOD SAMPLE TO CHECK HOW WELL YOUR DOG IS RESPONDING TO THE MEDICATION. IF THE CORTISOL LEVEL IS TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW A DOSAGE CHANGE WOULD BE REQUIRED AND A FURTHER CHECK AND BLOOD SAMPLE 10-14 DAYS LATER IS REQUIRED UNTIL YOUR DOG'S CORTISOL LEVEL BECOMES STABLE ON THE MEDICATION. FURTHER CHECKS AT 4 WEEKS, 12 WEEKS AND EVERY 3 MONTHS THEREAFTER ARE NECESSARY TO MONITOR THE RESPONSE TO TREATMENT AND TO PICK UP ON ANY SIDE EFFECTS OF THE MEDICATION.

A MINIMUM OF 6 MONTHLY CHECK UPS ARE REQUIRED BY LAW IF WE ARE PRESCRIBING MEDICATIONS FOR YOUR DOG.

TESTING

BLOOD TESTS - BLOOD TESTS WILL LOOK AT AND TRACK CHANGES IN STEROID LEVELS AND OTHER PARAMETERS WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN ABNORMAL AT THE TIME OF DIAGNOSIS. BLOOD TESTING IS REQUIRED EVERY 10-14 DAYS UNTIL THE CUSHING'S DISEASE IS STABLE, THEN EVERY 4 WEEKS, 12 WEEKS AND 3 MONTHS DEPENDING ON YOUR DOG'S ONGOING HEALTH AND CONDITION.

THERE IS A SPECIAL BLOOD TEST FOR CUSHING'S DISEASE CALLED THE ACTH SIMULATION TEST - THIS REQUIRES YOUR DOG TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THE DAY. A BLOOD TEST IS TAKEN 4-6 HOURS AFTER THE LAST PILL WAS GIVEN, THEN AN INTRAVENOUS INJECTION IS GIVEN TO STIMULATE CORTISOL PRODUCTION, ANOTHER BLOOD TEST IS TAKEN 1-2 HOURS LATER. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE YOUR DOG'S BLOOD TESTED AT THE RIGHT TIME. TO MONITOR THE RESPONSE TO MEDICATION YOUR DOG'S BLOOD SHOULD BE TAKEN 4-6 HOURS AFTER THE LAST PILL WAS GIVEN.

URINE SAMPLING - THIS IS HELPFUL TO CHECK ON KIDNEY FUNCTION, URINE INFECTIONS AND GLUCOSE LEVELS FOR DIABETES. BRINGING A URINE SAMPLE AT EACH CHECK GIVES US A LOT MORE INFORMATION ON YOUR DOG'S HEALTH.

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING - REGULAR BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING WOULD HELP TO IDENTIFY THOSE DOGS WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND ALLOW US TO START TREATMENT EARLIER. A BLOOD PRESSURE SCREEN AT THE FIRST BLOOD TEST WOULD BE HELPFUL IN IDENTIFYING THOSE DOGS WITH PROBLEMS.

