

Dog Disease – Understanding the Basics of Pyometra

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What is the dog disease Pyometra?

Pyometra in short means a pus-filled uterus which affects primarily dogs that are five years and older; more common older female dogs. If not surgically removed, Pyometra will often result in death for most dogs.

The main cause of Pyometra is usually an imbalance of female hormones, primarily progesterone which results in an overactive uterus lining. Secretions accumulate in the cavity of this organ and cause distention. Bacteria entering through the vagina may cause secondary infection in some cases; however, many of the pus-filled organs are sterile when cultured.

Pyometra usually occurs from one week to three months after a heat (but may occur at any time during any heat cycle) and may concur with a Pseudocyesis (false pregnancy) but there has not been enough evidence to suggest an establishment between these hormone-controlled diseases. The disease occurs in female dogs who have not bred for a prolonged period of time and those having produced litters.

Diagnose of Pyometra can be detected from the clinical signs and the history of a recent heat. The most common signs are digestive disorders such as loss of appetite, diarrhea, and vomiting. Owners might also want to be watchful of symptoms which may include swollen abdomen, excessive drinking of water, listlessness and vaginal discharge; which is often foul-smelling. Discharges indicate that the cervix is still open and this will reduce some of the abdominal pressure and toxicity associated with Pyometra.

Radiographs and blood counts will be necessary to confirm the disease. An x-ray (radiograph) will show the large, pus-filled uterus quite clearly in most cases. The white blood cell count may increase (indicating infection) two to ten times over normal limit.

The best way to avoid Pyometra is of course spaying your dog. This prevents the disease from developing as the uterus and ovaries are removed.

Is Surgery Going to be Safe?

As most veterinarians will agree, Pyometra is a surgical disease that requires the diseased organ to be removed for an increased chance of a complete recovery. As surgery suggest, there are certain potential risks to be held into consideration especially if performed on an older dog. Heart disease, kidney disorders, and other medical conditions may increase the risk of surgery. If proper supportive therapy is carried out, even the highest risk patients stand a good chance of survival and recovery. Consult your vet for their advice and best recommendations.

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