



Pyometritis

Pyometritis is more common than pyometra, according to Robert Hutchison, DVM. It is a similar condition and is treated essentially the same way. The distinction? Pyometritis - literally "pus-filled uterus" - usually develops four to six weeks after ovulation in nonpregnant bitches. Pyometra, on the other hand, occurs during or after pregnancy.

There was a time that either meant a hysterectomy for sure. Nowadays a growing number of vets are turning to the drug Lutalyse, which acts as a progesterone inhibitor, to treat pyometritis. Pyometritis is a hormonally induced disease most likely to occur in unspayed bitches who repeatedly come into season WITHOUT BEING BRED. "The uterine lining wears out over years of progesterone influence," explains Hutchison. "When you add estrogen, another normally occurring hormone in a bitch's cycle, it's like adding gasoline to fire." The resulting infection causes fever, extreme thirst, vomiting and dehydration, bloodshot eyes, vaginal discharge (only if the cervix is open), elevated white blood cell count, enlarged uterus, and abnormal results of kidney or liver testing. Antibiotic treatment is often inadequate and surgery is very risky on a bitch who is gravely ill, if not toxic. The use of lutalyse blocks the production of progesterone, causing the cervix to open if it is closed, enabling the uterus to return to a healthy state.

Giardia

The protozoan known as *Giardia lamblia* is the most common intestinal parasite afflicting humans. Spread through contact with infected feces or contaminated water, giardia has definite zoonotic potential, meaning the organism is capable of being passed from deer to cattle, cattle to dogs, dogs to humans and many other combinations. It is estimated that giardia is present in anywhere from 5 to 30 percent of the dogs in North America, and those figures may be low because of difficulties in diagnosis. Treatment has also been problematic, but new developments are on the horizon. Researchers at the University of Calgary have developed a giardia vaccine - which should be available in Canada and the U.S. by 1998. Meantime . . .

The giardia cyst can live in the environment for up to a year waiting for a host. Once ingested by dog, human, deer, etc., stomach acids cause the cyst to break down and the giardia assumes its active 'trophozoite' stage, attaching to the wall of the small intestine to multiply. Ten cysts can become a million trophozoites in less than 2 weeks. Some of the trophozoites revert to infectious cysts and exit the body in the stool.

Chlorination does not kill the protozoa. Whelping bitches shed a lot of cysts around the time of birth and pass them to the puppies. The most common symptom in the dog is recurring diarrhea - the dog will have diarrhea for a couple of days, then be OK for a couple of days, then have diarrhea again. The coat may be rough. The cysts are hard to find in a sample because they shrink quickly and may not even be in a single sample.

The current drug of choice is metronidazole (trade name Flagyl). Side effects include diarrhea and neurological upsets ranging from ataxia to seizures; birth defects, and only a 65% suc-

cess rate - which is declining as giardia becomes resistant.

Quinacrine (trade name Atabrine) causes side effects in 50% of the dogs given this 2nd choice drug - anorexia, fever, vomiting. Albendazole (trade name Valbazen) and fenbendazole (trade name Panacur) were originally developed as cattle wormers but were found to be effective against giardia. Albendazole has been implicated in birth defects, destruction of red blood cells, and immunosuppression. Fenbendazole, which is now available in liquid or powder form has greater efficacy than metronidazole, no side effects, and the added benefit of no bad taste. In the lab, giardia has not developed a resistance.

The other option is ayurvedic preparations. Herbs can be used to calm the diarrhea caused by giardia and to stop the cramps and colitis that can result from frequent straining. Herbs can coat the gastrointestinal tract, relieving the dog's symptoms and helping to deter the giardia from attaching to the small intestine. One particular herb, *Picramnia kuroora*, is used specifically as an anti-giardial agent. It has been proven effective but has a bitter taste.

Drug-Induced Cataracts

Seventeen cases of cataracts associated with long-term ketoconazole therapy were recently reported. Cataracts developed in both eyes and caused rapid deterioration of vision. The dogs were being treated for a systemic fungal infection called coccidioidomycosis, which requires the antifungal drug ketoconazole to be administered for an extended period of time.

gleaned from the AKC Gazette



AWARD DEADLINE WAS FEBRUARY 15!

The posted deadline for 1997 Awards was February 15, 1998 (see page 5 of the Dec/Jan 1997 issue). Awards chair Nancy Wolfe, is still seeking input regarding the creation of rig racing criteria in our awards program (see page 36, May/June 1997). Get out your calendars and race schedules and send your input - dates, mileage, team sizes, etc. - to Nancy ASAP: P.O. Box 56, Delta, OH 43515, USA. Certainly, El Nino has put a damper on things across the northern part of the US and southern Canada this year - unless you are into ice skating! Snow races were cancelled everywhere until the middle of January, but did rig racing season get extended? Is this the wave of the future? Let Nancy know.

Scheduling is not as simple as it appears - recall that the folks in Australia are SHOWING NOW, those of us in the US and Europe are RACING. The folks in Alaska, start racing in mid-December, are done with their preliminary races by the end of January, and start running the BIG championship races in February and March. So scheduling is pretty tricky!