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HEMOABDOMEN

What is it? Literally, Hemoabdomen translates into “blood in the abdomen.” There are two types of hemoabdomen – traumatic and non-traumatic. Traumatic hemoabdomen is the result of direct trauma or injury to the abdomen such as vehicular trauma, gun shot, or falls from height. Non-traumatic hemoabdomen may be caused from such things as rupture of a mass, clotting disorders, and the ingestion of rat poison.

Which animals get it/Who is affected? Both cats and dogs may suffer from hemoabdomen. Younger pets tend to have more problems with trauma and toxin induced hemoabdomen, and older pets tend to have more bleeding disorders and tumors.

What are the Clinical Signs? The clinical signs of hemoabdomen may include a pale gum color, weak pulse, accelerated heart rate, and a distended abdomen. Sometimes, the first signs will be collapse of the patient.

How is it diagnosed? Actual diagnosis of hemoabdomen can involve radiographs and an ultrasound, which may help locate fluid within the abdominal cavity. Many times some of the abdominal fluid may also be drained for testing. Among other things, these tests include looking for abnormal cells and determining the amount of blood in the abdomen.

How is it treated? If your pet is showing any of the clinical signs for hemoabdomen, they should be seen by a veterinarian right away. Once the cause of the hemoabdomen is determined, specific therapy can be employed to stop the bleeding. In some cases, surgery to stop the bleeding may be required. Otherwise, fluid therapy, blood transfusion, and abdominal compression bandages may be used to treat your pet depending on the severity.

What is the aftercare? Aftercare of hemoabdomen varies depending on how severe the internal bleeding is and what was done for treatment. If surgery is needed, post-operative care including fluid therapy, pain medications, and monitoring would be involved. If surgery is not needed, medications may be prescribed and owners must monitor for additional bleeding or return of any of the previous noted clinical signs.

What is the Prognosis? The prognosis will vary depending on the cause and severity of hemoabdomen and how soon it was discovered. It is not always a bleak picture. For patients that have rat poisoning, early identification of abdominal bleeding and aggressive therapy can often result in full recovery with no long term problems.

Can it be prevented? Hemoabdomen caused by vehicular trauma and rat poisonings are virtually 100% preventable. Keep your pets away from the road and on a leash at all times. Ideally, do not have rat/mouse poisons in the house or, if you must, keep them in containers and in areas where pets do not have access to them. Unfortunately, for dogs who have masses in their abdomen or other blood clotting problems, unless there are other warning signs that we can pick up on prior to bleeding, often there is no way to prevent the problem from occurring.