

Cholangiohepatitis

Client Handout

General Information:

Cholangiohepatitis is an inflammatory disorder of the liver and bile ducts of the gall bladder. The gall bladder, located within the liver, makes bile. Bile then flows through the bile ducts to the intestine to aid in indigestion. Cholangiohepatitis is most commonly seen in cats but dogs are occasionally affected.

Cause:

Bacterial infection may be present in some cases of Cholangiohepatitis but in other cases the cause is unknown. Other diseases that may be related to the development of Cholangiohepatitis include gall bladder obstruction, gall stones, inflammatory bowel disease and pancreatitis.

Clinical Signs:

Common signs include lack of appetite, depression, weight loss, intermittent vomiting and jaundice. These signs may occur suddenly or over time and may be intermittent or persistent.

Diagnosis:

Blood work, x-rays and ultrasound are useful in diagnosing Cholangiohepatitis. A liver biopsy is required for a definite diagnosis because the disease appears similar to other diseases of the liver.

Treatment:

Supportive care is very important and includes fluids, nutritional support and vitamin supplementation. Antibiotics are used to eliminate infection and chronic cases may be treated with immunosuppressive medications. Surgery may be necessary in the event of a bile duct obstruction.

Prognosis:

The prognosis is variable and depends on the severity of the disease. Some pets may require therapy for many months to years while others return to normal in a few days. The disease sometimes recurs after recovery.