

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Client Handout

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a chronic and recurrent syndrome where the gastrointestinal (GI) tract is infiltrated with inflammatory cells. There is no apparent age, sex, or breed predisposition for IBD in dogs or cats. However, middle-aged pets are most often diagnosed with this disease.

Animals affected with IBD may suffer from the following clinical signs: diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss, abdominal pain and decreased appetite. Clinical signs depend on the area and severity of the GI involvement. These signs may be persistent or may wax and wane over a period of weeks months, or years.

IBD is a diagnosis of exclusion and other potential causes for the GI signs your animal is experiencing must first be ruled out. Diagnostic tests may include: bloodwork, urinalysis, fecal examination, radiographs, +/- feline viral infectious screen (Felv/FIV). If these tests do not provide a definitive answer, gastrointestinal biopsies should be pursued. Biopsies of the gastrointestinal tract can be obtained via surgery or endoscopy. These tissue samples are then sent off to a pathologist to be examined at the cellular level under a microscope.

There are various treatment options available. Your doctor will formulate a treatment regimen based on the location, extent, and severity of the disease. Therapy may include dietary modification to a commercial hypoallergenic diet or a home-cooked diet and fiber supplementation (Metamucil or high fiber diet). Medications may include antibiotics, anti-inflammatory drugs and/or immunosuppressive drugs, such as prednisone.

The prognosis for most cases of IBD is good control, but poor for a cure. This disease often requires life long therapy and commitment.