

Pancreatic Issues
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As part of the endocrine and digestive system, not only does the canine pancreas produce the enzymes that digest food but it also produces insulin. When there is inflammation of the pancreas, called pancreatitis, the entire digestive system can be disrupted; throwing-off the dog's metabolism, causing diabetes and in severe cases, lead to death of the canine.

The Normal Digestion Process:

It's time for dinner. Your dog dances with anticipation while drool forms a tiny puddle of saliva onto the floor. He gobbles it up, some getting chewed, some being swallowed whole. Unlike his pet parent, your dog's mouth is designed to tear off large pieces of food, chew it and swallow it quickly, with saliva not playing a pivotal role in canine digestion.

The food moves down his esophagus into the stomach where it is broke down even more, or for that portion swallowed whole, it starts its breakdown process. Enzymes start getting added in the stomach, breaking down the food into its dietary nutrients. The smaller pieces begin their trek into the small intestine for additional breakdown and absorption of the nutrients, eventually passing into the large intestine and ending up as waste in your back yard.

The Normal Pancreas:

The pancreas is a pink glandular-type organ near the stomach and duodenum (the first of three sections of the small intestine). It adds more digestive enzymes as the food passes from the stomach to the duodenum in order to break down starches and continue the breakdown of protein. It also secretes insulin and glucagon (to regulate sugar metabolism).

Pancreatitis:

Inflammation of the pancreas can cause the digestive enzymes to be released outside of the pancreas/digestive system partnership and into other organs and tissues. These enzymes begin to complete their mission of breaking down fat and protein even though they are no longer within the digestive system. In short, the body begins to digest itself. If the pancreas' ability to produce insulin is affected, diabetes mellitus (commonly called type I or type II in pet parents) can occur.

The cause of canine pancreatitis is usually not identified however a few links have been attributed to traumas, drug interactions and tumors. Symptoms may include but are not limited to loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. Your veterinarian can use several methods for diagnosing pancreatitis including blood work and ultrasounds.

Traditional and "Western Medicine" Treatments:

Traditional treatments included 2-3 days of no food or water supplemented by IV fluids. More recent treatments include reduced fat diets with plenty of hydration whether by water intake or IV. Antibiotics are occasionally prescribed. Anti-vomiting and pain meds may reduce symptoms. Electrolytes and potassium supplements may also be given.

Eastern and Homeopathic Treatments:

Other treatments range from liver-supporting and anti-inflammatory herbs and homeopathic medicines such as veratrum album for diarrhea and vomiting to acupuncture. Acupuncture on Liver 3 (LR-3) for endocrine concerns and Stomach 36 (ST-36) for abdominal discomfort may assist with reducing symptoms.

One could theorize that by applying Pet Massage techniques along LR-3 (midway along the groove between the 2nd and 3rd metatarsal bones above the crease of the toes) and along ST-36 (below the knee in the cranial tibialis muscle) could also enhance the wellness of the dog.

References:

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Jim Carlson, DVM, CVA, CVSMT

Dr. Jim Carlson is a 1993 graduate of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine. He began his veterinary career doing mostly western, or conventional, medicine. As with many veterinarians, Dr. Carlson became dissatisfied with the responses he would get from the allopathic approach.

Slowly Dr. Carlson began to integrate other types of treatments, such as nutritional medicine, using products like glandulars and whole body supplements from Standard Process. He began practicing traditional homeopathy, and in 2003 added homotoxicology to his repertoire. In 2004 Dr. Carlson attended the Chi Institute to be trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture, and has been certified since 2005. In 2006, Dr. Carlson became certified by The Healing Oasis Wellness Center, and by the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association in Veterinary Spinal Manipulative Therapy, what we can call veterinary chiropractic in Ohio, since 2007.

Dr. Carlson is a referral veterinarian for The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Medvet for acupuncture. By using an integrated approach of combining these alternative approaches with conventional medical treatments, he and his team at Lifetime Pet Wellness are able to provide some of the best medical plans possible for your pet. Dr. Carlson has been featured in Hobby Farm Magazine, This Week community papers, and the Columbus Dispatch.