

WHAT IS INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE?

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) results from an inappropriate response of the immune system to substances in the gastrointestinal tract. These substances might include foods, preservatives, bacterial viruses, parasites, or other infectious diseases. For an unknown reason, the immune system begins to recognize one or more of these substances as foreign and reacts by trying to rid them from the body. Any region of the gastrointestinal tract from the stomach through the large intestine can be affected, and different regions may be affected to varying degrees. Severe cases of IBD, particularly in cats, can progress to a cancer called lymphosarcoma.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS OF IBD?

The clinical signs seen with IBD vary. Most commonly, the pet suffers from one or more of the following clinical signs: decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or weight loss. The pet may have any one of these clinical signs alone, or all of them, depending on the region of the gastrointestinal tract affected and the severity of inflammation. The frequency of vomiting or diarrhea can vary from multiple times daily to intermittent episodes. Some pets will begin to lose weight, despite having a reasonable appetite. The clinical signs may not be severe, and might be written off to the pet having a “sensitive stomach”. Many pets have had intermittent episodes of vomiting or diarrhea for months to years before seeking medical attention.

HOW IS IBD DIAGNOSED?

There are many reasons for vomiting, diarrhea, inappetence, and weight loss in cats and dogs. Your veterinarian may recommend special laboratory tests. Additionally, radiographs, ultrasound, and possibly endoscopic evaluation of the gastrointestinal tract may be indicated

HOW IS IBD TREATED?

Treatment is tailored to each individual pet and depends on the severity of the inflammation and the clinical signs. It is often a combination of diet and medications that must be used to control IBD.

CAN IBD BE CURED?

There is no cure for IBD. However, approximately 75% of pets can be controlled with diet change and medications that help to alleviate their clinical signs. The remaining 25% may range from having recurrent flare-ups of their clinical signs to not responding to medications at all. Although the majority of patients will require some form of life-long treatment, the odds are in our favor that the pet’s IBD can be controlled with the pet leading a normal, quality life.