

# INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD)

## BASICS

### OVERVIEW

- A group of gastrointestinal tract diseases that occur for unknown reason; characterized by inflammation of the lining of the intestines and accompanied by chronic gastrointestinal signs (such as vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss)
- Also known as “IBD”

### GENETICS

- Susceptibility genes (like those seen in human inflammatory bowel disease [IBD]) have not been identified in dogs and cats
- Certain forms of IBD are more common in some breeds of dogs, suggesting a possible genetic component of the disease processes
- Association of inherited chromosome fragility with IBD suggested in humans
- Certain genes, which are important components of normal immune responses, may make an individual susceptible to the development of IBD

### SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

#### Species

- Dogs and cats

#### Breed Predislection

- Some dog breeds are more likely to develop inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) than other breeds; examples of specific diseases and the breeds they affect are immunoproliferative enteropathy of basenjis and Norwegian lundehunds; histiocytic colitis of French bulldogs and boxers; and gluten-sensitive enteropathy in Irish setters; an increased incidence of IBD also is seen in the German shepherd dog
- Siamese may be more likely to develop IBD than other cat breeds

#### Mean Age and Range

- Most common in middle-aged animals, although younger animals (less than 2 years of age) may be affected

### SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Dogs—chronic intermittent vomiting, large- and/or small-bowel diarrhea, and weight loss are common
- Cats—lack of appetite (known as “anorexia”) is most common, followed by weight loss, vomiting, and diarrhea
- Rumbling or gurgling noises in the gastrointestinal tract (known as “borborygmus”); presence of excessive gas in the stomach and intestines (known as “flatulence”); blood in the stool (known as “hematochezia”); abdominal pain; and stools with mucus are reported less commonly
- Animal may appear healthy or may be thin and depressed
- Poor haircoat is noted frequently
- Abdominal palpation may reveal painful, thickened bowel loops and enlarged mesenteric lymph nodes (especially in cats)

### CAUSES

- Cause is unknown; most likely many factors lead to disease
- Cause likely involves complex interactions between the animal’s genetics; immune capabilities and response of the lining of the intestinal tract (known as “mucosal immunity”); and environmental (gastrointestinal bacteria) factors
- No convincing link definitively established with an infectious agent (such as virus or bacteria)
- *Giardia*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and normal resident gastrointestinal bacteria have been implicated
- Meat proteins, food additives, artificial coloring, preservatives, milk proteins, and gluten (wheat) are proposed causative agents

## TREATMENT

### HEALTH CARE

- Outpatient, unless the patient is debilitated from dehydration; low protein in the blood (known as “hypoproteinemia”); or has extreme weight loss with muscle wasting (known as “cachexia”)
- If the patient is dehydrated or must not be given food or water by mouth because of vomiting, fluids (such as lactated Ringer’s solution) should be administered
- If the animal has severely low levels of albumin in the blood (known as “severe hypoalbuminemia”) due to loss of protein into the intestinal tract (known as “protein-losing enteropathy”), consider colloids; colloids are fluids that contain larger molecules that stay within the circulating blood to help maintain circulating blood volume, examples are dextran and hetastarch

### ACTIVITY

- No restrictions

#### **DIET**

- Dietary manipulation is important; use hypoallergenic diets exclusively as dietary factors likely contribute to disease
- Dietary requirements may be based on specific disease (for example, avoiding gluten or wheat in Irish setters with gluten-sensitive enteropathy)

#### **SURGERY**

- Unlike the situation with humans, no surgical procedures are available for relief of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in veterinary patients

### **MEDICATIONS**

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive.

- Depends on underlying cause
- Affected animals should be treated with drugs to suppress the immune response (known as “immunosuppressive drugs”)

### **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

#### **PATIENT MONITORING**

- Periodic evaluations may be necessary, until the patient’s condition stabilizes
- No other follow-up may be required except yearly physical examinations and assessment during relapses

#### **PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE**

- Depends on underlying cause
- Avoid foods, food ingredients, or artificial colorings that may contribute to intestinal inflammation

#### **POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

- Dehydration; malnutrition; adverse drug reactions; low levels of protein in the blood (hypoproteinemia); low red-blood cell count (known as “anemia”); and diseases secondary to therapy
- Depends on underlying cause

#### **EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS**

- Generally a good-to-excellent short-term prognosis

### **KEY POINTS**

- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is not cured, but is controllable in most cases
- Relapses are common
- Be patient during the various food and medication trials that often are necessary to get the disease under control
- Strictly adhere to diet recommended by your pet’s veterinarian

