

## Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Inflammatory bowel disease is a common condition that results when cells involved in inflammation and immunity are called into the lining of the GI tract. This infiltration thickens the bowel lining and interferes with absorption. Chronic vomiting results if the infiltration is in the stomach or higher areas of the small intestine. A watery diarrhea with weight loss results if the infiltration is in the lower small intestine. A mucous diarrhea with fresh blood results if the infiltration occurs in the large intestine. Of course, the entire tract from top to bottom may be involved.

Many people confuse inflammatory bowel disease with irritable bowel syndrome, a stress-related diarrhea problem. A little vomiting or diarrhea here and there seems to be pretty standard for pet dogs and cats. After all, cats groom themselves and get hairballs. Dogs eat all sorts of ridiculous things they aren't supposed to. Still, many owners notice that their pets seem to have vomiting or diarrhea a bit more often than it seems they should.

Typically, the animal doesn't seem obviously sick. Maybe there has been weight loss over time but nothing acute. There is simply a chronic problem with vomiting, diarrhea or both. Inflammatory bowel disease is probably the most common cause of chronic intestinal clinical signs and would be the likely condition to pursue first.

The first step in pursuing this problem are tests to rule out *other* problems (such as liver disease or kidney disease). Since inflammatory bowel disease is localized to the GI tract, such tests are usually normal. A trial of a simple medication is often used to see if there is symptomatic relief. If this kind of non-invasive testing is not revealing, then the definitive test for inflammatory bowel disease is needed: a biopsy.

The causes of inflammatory bowel disease are not well understood. The cornerstone of treatment for inflammatory bowel disease is suppression of the inflammation. Dietary management is essential in the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

Kind Regards,

Scott & Chris