

Prostatic Disease

By Dr. Robert Van Hutchison, DVM

The following article was written by Dr. Hutchison, who is a co director of the Animal Clinic Northview, in North Ridgeville, Ohio. Internationally recognized for his work with canine frozen semen and canine reproduction, he is also a popular speaker nationally to both breeder and veterinary groups concerning canine reproduction, whelping and pediatrics. The STCA Education and Health Committee will be featuring Dr. Hutchison at our health seminar being presented during Montgomery County weekend in 1996.

Prostatic disease in male dogs is very similar to prostatic disease in male humans. As aging occurs, the prostate responds to a change in testosterone and change in the ratio of testosterone to estrogen.

The most common prostatic disease seen in the canine is Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH). The disease is characterized by a swollen, non-painful prostate gland with external signs exhibited by dripping blood from the penis and blood in the ejaculate. Blood is not killing to spermatozoa. However, enough blood and clotting can inhibit fertility. The disease is non-infectious (infected prostate glands exhibit fever, pain, and pus, not blood) in the ejaculate.

A common mistake is to treat BPH with only antibiotics. Since bacteria are not the causing agent, many owners are frustrated by the non-responsiveness of the disease.

As BPH is a result of hormonal body changes, the proper treatment is one of neutralizing the testosterone's effect on the prostate. This can be accomplished in a number of different manners:

1) Neutering - very effective in the treatment of BPH; however, very detrimental to future reproductive potential.

2) Estrogens - cause an initial regression in prostate gland size; however, the effects are temporary and rebound enlargement is seen. The estrogens are also very damaging to the spermatozoa and can cause bone marrow suppression.

3) Progesterones - currently the treatment of choice. The drugs most commonly used are Ovaban or Megace. The progesterones will cause a shrinking of the gland, stop the bleeding and will not suppress the sperm count. The drug is used daily for 21 days, then the male is maintained on a weekly dose. Side effects are minimal and results are outstanding.

If one suspects prostatic disease in a breeding male, a veterinarian knowledgeable in reproductive problems should be consulted. Ultrasound is essential for a definitive diagnosis of BPH. The ultrasound also allows one to access cystic formation within the prostate gland itself. Males over 3 years of age can show signs of BPH and most males over 6 years of age will show Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia on a biopsy. Many males with BPH will show no clinical signs until they are around bitches in season, then the clinical signs of bleeding, etc. will flare up.

Prostatic abscesses and tumors do occur in the male dog. These diseases are characterized by pain, fever and systemic illness and show distinctive changes in the gland when evaluated with the ultrasound. Neutering in the male dog does not prevent prostatic cancer.