

Cushings Disease
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE
Information Sheet WS062/09
Christopher Day - Veterinary Surgeon

Copyright © 2009 AVMC
Chinham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ UK
01367 710324
This is a page from www.alternativevet.org

CUSHINGS DISEASE

Cushings Syndrome – Hyperadrenocorticism
in Horses and Dogs

What is it?

The symptoms and signs of Cushings Disease arise from over-activity of the cortex of the adrenal gland (adrenal cortex). The fault may lie in the adrenal gland itself (e.g. tumour) or, more commonly, from over-activity of the pituitary gland beneath the brain, resulting in over-production of ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone), which stimulates the activity of the adrenal gland. It is a life-threatening disease which, if untreated, will usually progress quite rapidly to an unsustainable condition.

Cushings disease can be diagnosed with reasonable certainty by clinical signs and a general blood test profile. Clinical experience and the collection of typical signs and symptoms are a reasonable guide, particularly when supported by a suggestive blood result. However, there are more invasive specific blood testing techniques, available, which we do not advise. They are costly and, in our opinion, represent an unwarranted challenge to a system that is already clearly off balance.

Symptoms and signs

The symptoms/signs of the disease are increased thirst and increased appetite (this can be extreme in the dog), enlarged liver with dropped and swollen belly, thin skin, long, shaggy coat (with failure to shed winter coat in horses), loss of muscle, puffy swellings above the eyes in horses, tendency to laminitis and dental problems in horses and abnormal pads of fat tissue, which are very visible in horses around the shoulder and pelvic regions.

Treatment

There are conventional treatments, which can delay the progress of the disease. These are usually very expensive but can extend life expectancy. It is usually also possible to delay progress of the disease and maintain reasonable quality of life using [homeopathy](#). By this means, we can also usually control the tendency to laminitis. Treatment is usually more effective the earlier the disease is caught.

We would also recommend dietary changes, to a [natural feeding regime](#), to help the body to overcome the disease and we would advise against revaccination, which may itself represent part of the cause of so many cases in recent times.

Conditions that are possibly related:

Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) and Insulin Resistance in horses.

We have heard of this condition being called 'cushions disease' – presumably as a result of mishearing.

To return to the web site of the AVMC, click the 'BACK' button of your browser or click www.alternativevet.org

This site is subject to frequent ongoing development and expansion - please revisit to view new material