

Get More Tests for Dog's Digestive Problems

An ultrasound, endoscopy, and PTLI will help with diagnosis.

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Q. A dog in our family began having diarrhea. She has been tested for parasites. Her blood work is fine except for low protein levels. Now she is vomiting almost daily. What tests would you recommend to aid us in a diagnosis? Please help us. We love our Allie so much and can't stand to see her feeling like this.

A. I can understand why you are worried about your dog Allie. For most dogs, eating is the highlight of their day. There are some more advanced diagnostic tests that should be done to help identify the source of the problem now that your veterinarian has done basic testing for the most common causes of diarrhea.

First, Allie should have a thorough ultrasound exam of her abdomen to look for masses or abnormalities of the intestine. Her low protein levels suggest a syndrome known as "protein-losing enteropathy," in which protein and calories are lost into the intestines due to "leaky" intestinal walls.

The second test is an endoscopy to examine, and take samples of, the intestinal wall's inner lining. Although neither of these tests is inexpensive, they should give you some answers that could help Allie with her digestive problems.

Another possibility is a disease in which the pancreas does not secrete adequate digestive enzymes. A special blood test, a pTL1 test, can help with that diagnosis. The treatment is to add digestive enzymes to your dog's food so digestion is more normal.

If your veterinarian is not comfortable performing these tests, ask for a referral to a specialist who can do them.