

Bladder Disease in Dogs

Is treatment always needed?

By Shawn Messonnier, DVM

Bladder diseases are among the most common problems seen in dogs. Common causes include bladder infections, sterile cystitis, bladder stones, bladder tumors and cancer. Unfortunately, bladder problems are often treated incorrectly. Here are some helpful hints to distinguish minor problems from major problems that might require more aggressive therapy. Clinical signs of bladder disease include frequent urination, dribbling urine (incontinence), straining when trying to urinate, discolored urine (especially if bloody) and urinating large volumes. If your dog shows any of these signs, see your veterinarian immediately.

During a urinalysis, which should be conducted on all dogs with signs of bladder disease, crystals are often discovered. Crystals often occur in healthy dogs. Usually they require no treatment. Antibiotics are not necessary and will not help these dogs.

Dogs with signs of urinary disease should have diagnostic testing done, including a urinalysis, urine culture, blood profile, X-rays, and often an ultrasound examination of the bladder.

Although special medicated diets are often prescribed for dogs with bladder disease, they're usually not necessary. A wholesome natural diet, preferably canned food which has high water content, is better for most dogs with bladder disease.

Antibiotics are best reserved to treat dogs with bacterial infections confirmed on a culture test. Routine use of antibiotics increases the cost of care and can contribute to antibiotic resistance. Natural therapies, including olive-leaf extract, goldenseal, Oregon grape, and homeopathics often resolve bladder infections in many pets without the need for antibiotics.