Drug Breakthrough Holds Promise for Anemic Dogs

New drug temporarily stops red blood cell destruction in anemic dogs.

A team at Colorado State University is testing a new drug called liposomal clodronate to combat immune-mediated hemolytic anemia, a rare fatal blood disorder that affects primarily middle-aged female dogs, reported the Morris Animal Foundation, an organization that funds animal health studies.

Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia causes a dogs body to produce antibodies that attack its own red blood cells, leading to low red blood cell count and anemia. Clinical signs of the disease include pale gums, yellowing of the whites of the eyes, and lethargy.

Standard treatment consists of high doses of steroids, which take a few weeks to take effect. But some dogs do not have a few weeks to wait, says Dr. Steven Dow, the leading researcher of the study. We lose half our patients within their first week of diagnosis, he says.

Liposomal clodronate temporarily stops the red blood cell destruction in dogs with immune-mediated hemolytic anemia, buying time for the standard treatments to work. Preliminary studies indicate that the drug is effective, Dow says. He has applied for more funding from Morris Animal Foundation to support a larger clinical trial of the drug.

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