

Irritable Bowel Syndrome in Pets

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a general term used to refer to gastrointestinal infections that cause irritation and inflammation of the mucous membranes throughout the digestive tract, which includes the stomach and large and small intestines. Symptoms include stomach pain, diarrhea, constipation, nausea, bloating, gas and loss of appetite.

IBS is usually diagnosed when blood tests and stool samples rule out any other more serious illness that may also cause the symptoms your pet is experiencing. Veterinarians may take a biopsy to examine the digestive tissue or may just diagnose IBS.

There are a few medications that can be used to treat IBS symptoms, such as anti-inflammatory or corticosteroid medicines. Many owners opt for natural treatment, which can also be effective.

Dietary Changes

Symptoms of IBS can often be reduced with a diet change. Many experts believe that IBS can be caused by a poor diet or dietary allergies, so improving the quality of your pet's food can help tremendously. Avoid foods with meat by-products, corn, wheat, soy, dyes or preservatives.

If you suspect allergies, switch your pet to a high quality, novel protein and limited ingredients. High quality kibble can be effective. Raw food or home-cooked diets may improve your pet's health. There are many foods on the market that fit the bill, and many of them are quite affordable. Feed for at least a month to see if symptoms are reduced.

Consider adding more fiber in your pet's diet, such as sweet potato or pumpkin. The fiber regulates the digestion and can help with both constipation and diarrhea.

Natural Remedies

If traditional medicines aren't improving your pet's health, there are several natural remedies for soothing the digestive tract and reducing inflammation.

Probiotics and digestive enzymes may help heal your pet's gut from inflammation and medications.

Some studies suggest that diets enriched in omega-3 fatty acids may help decrease the inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract.

Licorice is known as an effective tonic for the digestive system and also contains anti-inflammatory properties that can reduce swelling in the digestive tract. Marshmallow has similar effects, soothing inflamed mucous membranes. Slippery elm has long been known as an effective treatment for digestive disorders. Slippery elm contains many trace minerals, such as manganese, iodine, protein and soothing mucilage, which work together to soothe and strengthen mucous membranes and improve overall health in the digestive system.