

# CUSHING'S DISEASE

Cushing's Disease is also termed "Hyperadrenocorticism." It is a disorder characterized by excessive production of cortisol by the adrenal glands. The adrenal glands (small bean-shaped glands located near the kidneys) most often produce excessive amounts of cortisol because they are stimulated to do so by the "master hormone gland"—the PITUITARY GLAND which is a pea-shaped gland at the base of the brain. 10-15% of dogs with Cushing's Disease develop high cortisol levels because of an adrenal gland tumor which is producing the excess hormone.

**DIAGNOSIS** is confirmed by blood tests.

**SIGNS** of the disease are a result of the high cortisol levels and include poor hair coat, hair loss, enlarged belly, increased thirst, increased urination, and increased appetite. Dogs with Cushing's Disease are also more prone to infections and Diabetes mellitus.

**TREATMENT** is directed at decreasing the blood cortisol levels. In dogs with a tumor of the adrenal gland, surgery is required to remove the tumor. Dogs with overly active adrenal glands due to the over-stimulation by the pituitary gland are treated with a drug designed to shrink the size of the gland, thereby decreasing production of cortisol. The dose of these drugs must be adjusted to the particular needs of each individual pet.

*Medical treatment only CONTROLS the disorder.* Some patients require re-evaluation and possible additional treatment sometime in the future. Most patients, however, improve dramatically with regrowth of hair, and decreases in thirst, urination and appetite. General good health returns.

Individuals respond differently to the medication, making close observation and repeated blood testing a necessity. Under-dosage allows the condition to progress while over-dosage can result in a medical emergency due to a lack of blood cortisol. *It is VERY IMPORTANT for you to return on time for retesting and evaluation.*

Please notify the clinic IMMEDIATELY if your pet shows any of the following signs:

1. Change in appetite
2. Vomiting
3. Diarrhea
4. Listlessness
5. Increase in water consumption.

***DO NOT ADMINISTER THE NEXT DOSE OF MEDICATION BEFORE CHECKING WITH US IF ANY OF THE ABOVE SIGNS ARE OBSERVED.***