

Prostate Awareness

The prostate is an accessory sex gland found in the male dog, it is located in the pelvic cavity where it encircles the urethra (the tube connecting the urinary bladder to the outside) at the bladder neck.

The prostate gland functions to provide fluid needed for the transport and survival of sperm. The size of the prostate gland is under the direct influence of male sex hormones, after castration the prostate gland shrinks. Diseases of the prostate are most commonly seen in older sexually intact dogs, though neutered dogs can also be affected.

Clinical signs of prostate disease include:

- ❖ the presence of blood in the urine
- ❖ straining to pass urine
- ❖ constipation
- ❖ flattening of faeces
- ❖ hindlimb weakness or back pain

Diagnosis of prostatic disease is based on the history and findings on clinical examination by a vet, including digital rectal examination. There is also a blood test available, which tests for a protein secreted by the prostate when it is enlarged or diseased. Often further tests are required including ultrasound examination, urine analysis and cytology of fluid obtained from prostatic washes (this is where the urethra within the prostate is flushed and the cells are collected for analysis).

What types of prostatic diseases exist and what treatment is needed?

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia is the most common prostatic disease affecting dogs. It is a non cancerous enlargement of the prostate , more common in older entire males, enlargement impinges on surrounding structures causing pain and discomfort. **80% of uncastrated male dogs over 5 years old are affected by BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia)**

Treatment of BPH may involve

1. Castration as this removes the influence of testosterone (the hormone which causes benign prostatic hyperplasia)

or

2. Drugs can be given which inhibit testosterone production

Prostatitis

Infection of the prostate gland (prostatitis) usually results from bacteria ascending from the lower urinary tract, prostatitis is commonly associated with underlying prostatic disease though. Acute prostatitis can be severe and have drastic consequences.

Clinical signs of Prostatitis may include:

- ❖ Fever
- ❖ Loss of appetite
- ❖ Abdominal Pain
- ❖ Lethargy
- ❖ Weakness
- ❖ Pain on urination
- ❖ Blood in the urine

Treatment of prostatitis includes antibiotic therapy and supportive treatment, castration is also recommended.

Prostate Cancer

Usually affects older dogs both intact and neutered, these tumours can be aggressive spreading to local lymph nodes and the spine or pelvis.

Clinical Signs may include:

- ❖ Poor appetite
- ❖ Weight Loss
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Hindlimb Weakness
- ❖ Back pain

Diagnosis is achieved using ultrasound and taking biopsies.

Treatment is often unrewarding and the prognosis is often, unfortunately guarded.