

Leaky Dog?

Fact Sheet about Urinary Incontinence in Dogs

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Signs of Incontinence

Are there puddles of urine in the house or wet spots where your dog has been lying or sitting? Does your dog have wet hair between the back legs or smell like urine? If the answer is “yes” to any of these, your dog may be experiencing a condition called urinary incontinence.

What is Urinary Incontinence?

Urinary incontinence is the loss of your dog’s ability to control urination. The sphincter muscle in the urethra (the tube that leads from the bladder to the outside) becomes weak and is less effective at holding back urine. This is called urethral sphincter hypotonus. It primarily affects middle-aged to older, spayed females but all dogs may suffer from it.

How it Happens

Dogs with urinary incontinence can hold their urine while awake but often “leak” when they are relaxed or asleep. Dogs often start with occasionally leaking small amounts of urine. These episodes gradually increase in amounts and frequency as time goes by.

Signs

Owners may also notice their dog licking their penis or vulva more frequently. Skin around the genitalia may be red and irritated; and the hair may be damp and smelly.

Other Reasons for Urinary Incontinence

If your dog is leaking urine it is very important to schedule a visit with your veterinarian to rule out other causes of incontinence:

- Urinary tract infection
- Bladder stones
- Injuries or degenerative diseases of the back
- Prostate problems
- Birth defects
- Diseases that cause excessive drinking like diabetes
- Senility
- Submissive urination
- Lack of house training

Treatment Options

If your dog has been diagnosed with urethral sphincter hypotonus there are treatment options. The first choice is typically the prescription of drugs that increase the sphincter muscle tone. Other options include surgery to correct an ectopic ureter (when the tubes that propel urine from the kidneys to the

bladder end in the wrong spot within the body) or collagen injections into the urethra to add bulk to the area and decrease the diameter of the urethra.

Drug Options

There is no “cure”, patients need life-long medication to control the problem. The two most commonly used medications to treat urinary incontinence in dogs due to urethral sphincter hypotonus are Diethylstilbestrol (an estrogen) and Phenylpropanolamine HCl (PPA). There is now an FDA-approved PPA product called “PROIN®” that comes in various strength option chewable tablets, which most dogs like. PROIN® is well-tolerated by dogs and over 90% of dog owners in the 180 day field study to test effectiveness said they were satisfied with the results. PROIN® must be given every day for continued effect. Up until recently, there were no FDA-approved PPA products for the treatment of this issue. FDA-approval of a drug is important because it means that the manufacturers have met strict production requirements, and have conducted scientific studies to prove that the drug is safe and effective.

If your dog is leaking, call us today to schedule an appointment to speak to one of our doctors about your dog’s condition and the best treatment for their diagnosis. There are affordable and effective options out there to help.

Important Drug Information: PROIN® may cause increased thirst; therefore provide ample fresh water. Use in dogs with incontinence due to a urinary tract infection will mask symptoms. PROIN® is not effective in dogs with incontinence due to neurologic disease or malformation. PROIN® may cause hypertension; therefore use with caution in dogs with pre-existing heart disease, hypertension, liver disease, kidney insufficiency, diabetes, glaucoma, and conditions with a predilection for hypertension. Use with caution in dogs receiving sympathomimetic drugs, tricyclic antidepressants, or monoamine oxidase inhibitors as increased toxicity may result. Use with caution in dogs administered halogenated gaseous anesthetics as this may increase the risk of cardiac arrhythmias. The most commonly reported side effects were: emesis, hypertension, anorexia, weight loss, proteinuria, and behavioral changes. Please refer to full package label for complete product information.

Susan Nelson, DVM, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Clinical Sciences at the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University. Dr. Nelson received her BA in Biology in 1985 from Hastings College in Hastings, NE. She then completed her DVM at Kansas State University in 1989. After receiving her DVM, Dr. Nelson spent her next 14 years as an associate veterinarian in a companion animal practice in Manhattan, KS. In 2003, Dr. Nelson joined the faculty at the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University. She is currently a clinical instructor for senior veterinary students in the hospital’s Pet Health Center, where students are taught the necessary skills needed to meet the challenges of being a primary care veterinarian. She also works in conjunction with the hospital’s mental health therapist in the instruction of communication skills. Her interests are in wellness and preventative medicine. Dr. Nelson is also a board member for the Kansas State Animal Response Team (KSSART), an organization that is active in the development of animal disaster response for the state of Kansas.

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