

# “Cushing’s Disease” Canine Hyperadrenocorticism



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Hyperadrenocorticism, also known as Cushing’s disease, is a chronically debilitating hormone imbalance that can affect many species. Cushing's disease results from excessive cortisol in the bloodstream and the symptoms all stem from long-term over-exposure to this steroid hormone.

## Symptoms:

There are many clinical signs that usually come on gradually and can be mistaken as part of the normal aging process. The following list of common symptoms:

- Drinking excessively; water bowl being filled more frequently than in the past
- Urinating excessively / incontinence
- Unable to hold their bladder all night or cry to go outside during the night
- Urinary tract infections or true urine leaking
- Panting all the time
- Increased / Ravenous appetite; beg incessantly or steal food from the garbage
- Pot-bellied appearance
- Muscle loss / weakness
- Exercise intolerance, lethargy, reluctance to jump up on furniture or climb stairs
- Skin Disease
- Thin wrinkled skin, hair loss, blackheads, poor regrowth after clipping, persistent skin infections, delayed wound healing, hard calcium deposits in skin

Aside from the symptoms described above, advanced untreated Cushing's disease puts a dog at risk for the following serious problems: calcium oxalate bladder stones, diabetes mellitus, and pulmonary thromboembolism.

## Testing:

An initial database is often collected in the form of a blood panel and urinalysis. Your veterinarian will look for hallmark indicators that are supportive of Cushing's disease prior to definitive testing because many diseases can appear similar in their clinical signs. The definitive test for Cushing’s disease is called a Low Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test. This test requires multiple blood pulls over the course of 8 hours and will be performed as a day-long drop-off appointment.

## Treatment & Follow-up Instructions:

Cushing’s is managed with a medication (Vetoryl) to suppress adrenal gland function and secretion of excess hormone. Careful dosing and frequent bloodwork monitoring is required to ensure appropriate dose as life-threatening complications can occur with overdose. Diet and activity can continue as normal.

After initiating therapy and after every dose change, a recheck of electrolytes and cortisol hormone levels will be re-evaluated in 2 weeks. If medication levels look appropriate, the next followup will likely be in 1 months depending on doctor discretion.

**\*\*At your recheck appointment, do not give the morning dose of Vetoryl and please arrive first thing in the morning. Bring your pet’s food and medications in with them that morning. We will be collecting a blood sample and giving their Vetoryl that morning.\*\***

### Recommendations:

If possible, please keep a journal of clinical signs. Record amount of water consumed, energy level, urination habits etc so we can monitor the decrease of clinical signs to ensure that the meds are working appropriately. This is the most effective way to know that your pet is at the appropriate dose of Vetoryl.

### Monitor for Illness:

Because excessive suppression of the adrenal glands can result in severe illness, you will also receive a "rescue dose" supply of steroids to use ONLY if signs of severe illness to supplement their steroid levels. Monitor your pet for no interest in food >24 hours, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, abdominal pain, or any new symptoms/concerns. If seen, give a dose of Prednisone and recheck with us ASAP.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to help in the care of your pet. Please call if you have any questions or concerns.

**For after hours emergencies, contact the East Texas Pet Emergency Clinic at (903) 759-8545. They are located at 812 Gilmer Rd., Longview, TX 75604.**