

Immune Mediated Hemolytic Anemia

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Overview

Immune mediated anemia (IMHA) is a disease in which the body's immune system attacks and kills the body's own red blood cells. The attack begins when antibodies attach to and target the animal's own red blood cells for destruction.

The causes of IMHA remain largely unknown. While some cases of IMHA may be associated with a triggering event (cancer, infection, and perhaps even vaccinations), these events do not explain why the immune system misdirects its arsenal of weapons against the animal it is meant to protect.

IMHA occurs more often in dogs than in cats, in middle-aged animals (3 to 8 years old), and in females rather than males. While any breed can be affected, certain breeds develop IMHA more often than others do, such as the cocker spaniel, springer spaniel, poodle and Old English sheepdog.

IMHA is a rapidly life-threatening disease. Even with appropriate treatment, this disease can be fatal.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- IMHA is generally diagnosed by bloodwork and a specialized blood test called a Coomb's test. A slide agglutination test can also be performed. X-rays, ultrasound and/or more specialized blood tests may be recommended to look for an underlying cause of the disease.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. If an underlying cause is determined, appropriate treatment should be started. In addition, affected animals are treated with drugs to suppress the immune system such as steroids. Some animals need fluid therapy and blood transfusions. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Pale gums
- Yellow tinged gums or whites of the eyes
- Dark or dark yellow urine
- Tiring easily, weakness

- Lethargy

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*