

HEMORRHAGIC GASTROENTERITIS (HGE)

(BLOODY VOMITING AND DIARRHEA)

About HGE

Hemorrhagic gastroenteritis (HGE) is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines which results in repeated vomiting and diarrhea both of which become bloody as the condition progresses. There are a variety of risk factors which may result in gastroenteritis which then progresses to HGE. Risk factors include: eating rancid or spoiled food, dead animals, foreign material, & toxic plants, stress, and having a high load of internal parasites in the intestines such as hook or whip worms. Some clinicians feel HGE is caused by a gastrointestinal virus.

Symptoms

- Acute onset of bloody vomit
- Acute onset of progressively bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Anorexia
- Lethargy
- Progressive dehydration
- Fever
- Eventual hypovolemic shock

Diagnosis

- **Physical exam** reveals dehydration, abdominal pain, fever, and usually a high heart rate.
- **Blood work** usually normal except for severe dehydration. A CBC (complete blood count) and blood chemistry profile is recommended to eliminate other causes of bloody diarrhea and vomiting.
- **Radiology**- (X-rays) usually show dilated loops of intestine with fluid and gas, but it is not a typical "obstructive pattern" seen with a foreign body or other GI obstruction..

Therapy

Generally aggressive supportive care with IV fluids, antibiotics, anti-ulcer medications will turn these dogs right around in a day or two, sometimes even within a few hours after getting re-hydrated. Occasionally a dog will need to be given an anti-emetic (anti vomiting) drug as well. The bloody diarrhea usually takes several days to clear up but the stool should get firmer and less bloody every day. The animal is started back on small amounts of bland food and water only after not vomiting for more than 24 hours. It generally takes 2-3 days for the dogs to recover and may take up to a week for the stool to be normal.

Prognosis

Fair to good with aggressive supportive care. If the condition has not been promptly addressed, the prognosis is less favorable. Dogs that present in a weak & shocky condition are at risk to become septic when bacteria from the compromised gut invades the blood stream causing a severe bacterial infection which then spreads to the entire body via the blood. Dogs that become septic have a poor prognosis and die of multiple organ failure. The key to a favorable outcome is early aggressive therapy.