

URINARY INCONTINENCE

Urinary incontinence is particularly a problem in female dogs. The first signs are often leaving a pool of urine behind after sleeping or urinating while walking. The key to look for is that urination is occurring without the dog knowing. There are a variety of causes of urinary incontinence, some of them are curable and others are not.

In puppies and young dogs, we can see anatomical deformities that mean the urine is not passing through the correct pathways. The most common of these are ectopic ureters (these are the ducts that should transport urine from the kidneys to the bladder but deliver the urine to the wrong place). In some cases these can be referred for surgical correction and can be cured.

In older dogs incontinence can be due to drinking more than usual. This can be due to a large variety of diseases including liver disease, kidney disease, diabetes or other hormone imbalances, and may need long term treatment. Urinary tract disease can also cause incontinence due to pain and inflammation. Infections of the bladder and urethra can occur and cause frequent urination that is often seen as incontinence.

The most common cause of true incontinence is called urethral sphincter mechanism incontinence. The urethral sphincter is a circular muscle that prevents urine exiting the urethra and is under voluntary control. When this is not as strong as it should be, urine can leak out whenever. This is much more common in desexed female dogs than males and most frequently occurs when the dog is lying down.

To diagnose the cause of your dogs incontinence, we will first perform a complete physical examine and request a thorough history. We will also ask you to bring in a urine sample. Urine gets checked for concentration, blood, protein, pH and other elements which helps us determine if an underlying disease may be present and may be the cause of the incontinence. In many cases we will also check the urine for crystals (which is an entirely different disease process so needs to be diagnosed if present.)

Urine testing may result in the need to do blood testing. This can be performed in our hospital and will provide information about your dogs red and white bloods cells which helps us determine if any infectious or inflammatory process is present. It also tests for liver and kidney function, diabetes and can provide information about other disease processes that may cause incontinence. It is also essential if we are planning to put your dog on long term medications as we must be sure all organs are fully functional and can adequately deal with the medications.

Urethral sphincter mechanism incontinence can usually be controlled using hormone therapy with oestrogen. The treatment protocol involves starting with daily doses then once the medication has taken effect, reducing to once or twice weekly doses. Our second treatment option is a liquid medication that acts on the nervous system which operates the urethral sphincter and this is given twice daily. Both of these medications are life long and do require regular check ups and blood tests. We may also consider referral to Melbourne for surgical intervention in some cases.

As these treatments are prescription medications, there are legal requirements for continued repeat scripts. This includes regular health checks and blood tests. If these are not done, we will have to refuse to provide further prescriptions. Please call the clinic to arrange a visit if required or a repeat script.

If you have any queries regarding this condition or your dogs medication please call us on 53811996.