

Canine Inappetence



A common problem

Appetite changes can frequently trigger a call or visit to the veterinarian. In a typical month, most veterinarians report that up to one quarter of their dog patients suffer from inappetence, 14% on average.¹

Almost any disease can cause inappetence, which can manifest as:

Hyporexia

Decrease in eating

Dysrexia

Altered patterns of eating

Anorexia

Complete lack of eating

It is important to ask pet owners to monitor any changes in their dog's eating behavior.

Early recognition of any decreases or changes in appetite is essential as a gradual or sudden loss of appetite may be the first or only sign their dog is sick.

Clinical and emotional impact

- Improper food intake can have a tremendously negative impact on a dog's underlying disease and quality of life²
- Nutrition promotes optimal health, response to disease and is identified as the fifth vital sign for standard physical exams³
- Pet owners can perceive an inappetent dog as suffering and may associate poor eating with decreased quality of life,² which is often cited as the single most important factor in deciding to have their dog euthanized⁴
- Veterinarians, staff and pet owners go to great lengths to get inappetent dogs to eat normally again

¹Aratana Research. September 2015.

²Villalobos Alice. Quality of Life Scale. *Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

³WASAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines 2011. *J Small Anim Pract*. Vol 52. July 2011. Available at: <http://www.wsava.org/guidelines/global-nutrition-guidelines>. Accessed April 7, 2017.

⁴Freeman LM, Rush JE, Farabaugh AE, et al. Development and evaluation of a questionnaire for assessing health-related quality of life in dogs with cardiac disease. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 2005 Jun 1;226(11):1864-8.

Signs of inappetence may be difficult to recognize or verbalize

You should monitor and ask pet owners about:

- ✓ Decreased food consumption
- ✓ Muscle wasting
- ✓ Poor hair coat
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Lip smacking
- ✓ Change in normal behavior

Multitude of underlying causes

Inappetence may be associated with numerous conditions or disease processes:

Systemic or chronic

- Aging
- Autoimmune diseases
- Cancer
- Endocrine diseases
- Gastrointestinal diseases
- Heart disease
- Infectious disease
- Kidney disease
- Medications
- Nasal diseases
- Neurologic diseases
- Pain
- Respiratory diseases

Acute

- Behavioral (environmental changes)
- Gastroenteritis
- Medications
- Pain
- Psychological
- Post Surgery

Consequences

Prolonged inappetence, if left untreated, can become even more detrimental to the patient than the underlying disease.

- In many cases, a poor appetite can affect the veterinarian's ability to diagnose the underlying condition or continue treatment
- When animals do not eat over a period of time, they experience weight loss and muscle wasting
- May decrease quality of life leading to decreased survival

Summary

Inappetence is a common health concern in dogs and its long-term effects can be life-threatening. There are numerous underlying chronic and acute causes. Due to its detrimental consequences, it is important to recognize signs of hyporexia or dysrexia early so the underlying condition can be diagnosed and managed appropriately.

