

Puppy Love

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A Thermometer Never Lies

Caroline Coile, Ph.D is the Nutrition and Health columnist for AKC Family Dog and a two-time AKC Canine Health Foundation Award winner. Pancreatitis is a subject Coile knows well, not only as a professional canine researcher, but because her dog, Beanie, went through the difficult and stressful experience. Here she shares her story:

Beanie loves to eat. But one day, after eating his very favorite treat—a flaky biscuit—he vomited it up. He was standing with his back kind of hunched. I gently pressed on his abdomen, and he yelped. Out came the thermometer, which told me his temperature was 103 degrees. We were in the car within minutes. The veterinarian palpated his abdomen, which was definitely tender; took his temperature, which was still high; and drew blood. Beanie received pain medication, antibiotics, and intravenous fluids to combat fluid loss and came home with strict instructions not to eat that day, even smelling food—could have caused his pancreas to secrete enzymes and slow its healing. He could lick ice cubes, and then drink a bit of water. The next day, he was allowed to eat six tiny meals of low-fat, high-carbohydrate food. After a week, Beanie progressed to a veterinary prescription diet for dogs with pancreatitis. After a month, Beanie was able to gradually transition back to his old diet, minus the high-fat treats. Eventually, he even got his breakfast biscuits—but no more butter.



A Doctor's Warning

Pancreatitis in dogs is a condition that owners must be informed about before it strikes because the warning signs may not always be obvious at first, the symptoms might be mistaken for something less serious, and yet it's potentially life-threatening. The pancreas releases enzymes that aid in digestion. When the organ is working normally, the enzymes become active only when they reach the small intestine. In a dog with pancreatitis, however, the enzymes activate when they're released, inflaming and causing damage to the pancreas and its surrounding tissue and other organs. According to the *Whole Dog Journal*, the enzymes can actually begin to digest the pancreas itself, which causes extreme pain to your dog. Red flag symptoms are: vomiting, abdomen pain, diarrhea, loss of appetite, dehydration, lethargy, fever. If your dog exhibits multiple signs together, and repeatedly, an emergency visit to the veterinarian is vital.



Prevention is a Life Style

While you can't completely prevent pancreatitis, the following will help reduce the risk of your dog developing the disease and ensure his health and well-being:

- Don't let your dog become overweight.
- Avoid high-fat diets.
- Avoid giving your dog table scraps.
- Don't let your dog have access to garbage!



The day after Thanksgiving is known for more than just Black Friday bargains. It's one of the busiest days of the year for pancreatitis-related emergency visits to the vet.