



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

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Clostridium

Issue Description

Clostridium is a large genus containing gram-positive bacteria, some of them capable of causing diarrhoea in dogs. The two most frequent are *Clostridium difficile* and *Clostridium perfringens*. All *Clostridium* bacteria are anaerobic (they thrive where there is no oxygen) and capable of producing endospores.

Symptoms

Clostridium perfringens

This is a common bacterium that can be found in the stool of a large percentage of healthy animals and people. It is a common cause of "food poisoning" in people, and is probably an important cause of diarrhea in dogs and cats. Our understanding of the role of this bacterium in disease in dogs and cats is limited by the fact that it is found in so many healthy animals, so simply growing it from the stool of a diarrheic dog or cat does not prove that it is causing the animal's illness.

Clostridium difficile

This bacterium is a very important cause of diarrhea (and more severe intestinal disease) in people, and is possibly an important cause of diarrhea in dogs and cats. It is rarely found in healthy adult pets, but is relatively common in puppies and kittens.

Clostridium botulinum

This bacterium produces the toxin that causes botulism, a potentially devastating disease that is very rare in dogs and cats. Botulism usually occurs following ingestion of food that has been improperly stored, in which *C. botulinum* has grown and produced its potent toxins.

Clostridium tetani

This bacterium produces the toxin that causes tetanus, which can occur in dogs and cats, however these species are relatively resistant to this disease. Tetanus usually occurs when a wound becomes contaminated with *C. tetani* from the soil, followed by growth of the bacterium and production of potent toxins.

Treatment

If the animals chronic diarrhea is caused by *C. perfringens*, it can be easily treated with antibiotics. Commonly used antibiotics include ampicillin, amoxicillin, metronidazole, erythromycin, and tylosin. Response to the antibiotics can usually be seen within days of beginning the medication, while the full course of treatment will typically last for a few weeks. A dog does not need treatment for *C. perfringens* if it does not have persistent diarrhea with no other apparent cause, since excessive administration of antibiotics will cause the bacterium to develop resistance.

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