

Bladder Stones

The occurrence of bladder stones is not uncommon in our canine friends and can lead to serious discomfort and even secondary problems if not treated. These stones are rock-like minerals that form in your dog's urinary bladder. There can be several small gravel-sized stones or large single stones in the bladder. In this handout, we will discuss the symptoms, treatment, and prevention of bladder stones in dogs.

It is normally not difficult to detect that your dog is experiencing discomfort related to their urinary tract. The two most common signs of bladder stones are hematuria and dysuria. The former symptom involved the presence of blood in your dog's urine while dysuria is a term to describe when your dog is straining to urinate. If you notice that your dog is having difficulty urinating, do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian. If possible, try to collect a fresh urine sample in a clean plastic cup to bring with you to the veterinary practice. Although these symptoms are good indicators, dogs with bladder infections (without stones) can exhibit hematuria and dysuria.

The build up of bladder stones can lead to serious pain and your pet may even cry out when trying to urinate. It is important to catch this condition early, so that surgery or secondary infections can be avoided and additional stones will not form. Your veterinarian will want to perform a laboratory evaluation of your dog's urine and will also palpate the urinary bladder to see if stones can be felt. In many cases, your veterinarian may want to take x-rays or ultrasound your dog to search for bladder stones.

If it is determined that your pet has bladder stones, your veterinarian will recommend the appropriate treatment. In serious cases where larger stones are involved, or stones that are unlikely to dissolve with other therapies, surgery may be necessary. Removing bladder stones involves opening the abdomen and urinary bladder and it will take your dog several days to recover. Certain types of bladder stones can be dissolved with special prescription diets and your veterinarian will notify you if this is an option. If diet therapy is chosen, it is very important that you follow the exact diet regiment as outlined by the veterinary staff. It can take several weeks to months to fully dissolve bladder stones and your veterinarian will want to follow-up with your dog's treatment until the stones are eliminated.

Once you have eliminated your dog's bladder stones, there are steps that can be taken to prevent future occurrence. Maintaining your dog on a special diet may be indicated and your veterinarian may want to perform follow-up urinalysis, x-rays or ultrasound to detect recurrence. Non invasive investigation and careful monitoring can detect this problem early helping to avoid surgery!