

Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CDS) Senility in Dogs

Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CDS) is a disease associated with aging. It can occur in dogs aged 8 years and older. Scientists believe that CDS in dogs is similar to Alzheimer's disease in people. Pet owners liken the signs of CDS to senility.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms seen with CDS include: disorientation, defecating or urinating inappropriately in the house, pacing or wandering, a change in sleep patterns with the affected dog staying up most of the night, and changes in relationships between the dog suffering from CDS and family members.

CAUSES

What causes CDS? Like Alzheimer's disease, plaques of protein accumulate in brain cells, leading to cell death. Secondly, the process of aging causes an increase in oxygen free radicals. Oxygen free radicals cause brain cell damage and death. A loss of brain cells leads to the signs of CDS. Thirdly, dogs suffering from CDS experience a change in chemical levels (e.g., dopamine) within the brain. A decrease in active dopamine leads to disorientation, and inappropriate sleeping, eating, and elimination patterns.

DIAGNOSIS

It is important to consult with your veterinarian to rule out other possible disease processes that might cause symptoms similar to CDS. For instance, a dog with a urinary tract infection might pace, have a change in sleeping pattern, and urinate frequently in the house. A dog with severe liver disease may become disoriented, wander aimlessly, and have a change in eating and sleeping patterns. A dog with a brain tumor or a dog experiencing sudden blindness may exhibit symptoms similar to CDS. Consult with your veterinarian if you suspect that your dog suffers from Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome.

TREATMENT

What can be done to treat CDS? A drug known as Anipryl (Selegiline HCl), which prolongs the action of dopamine is given orally once a day. Anipryl improves the lives of seventy to seventy-five percent of dogs affected by CDS. For those dogs amenable to Anipryl therapy, symptoms improve by at least 50% within the first month of therapy.

COSTS

The costs of treating a dog with CDS should be separated into two different areas – diagnostic and monitoring blood testing, and the cost of the medication. A full blood workup to determine if any other conditions exist, including a serum chemistry profile, a complete blood count, and thyroid testing runs approximately \$160-170. A urinalysis costs between \$65-75. Annual monitoring will cost about the same. The cost of Anipryl is between \$62-70/ month, or about \$2.00 per pill.

Please do not hesitate to speak with our hospital staff regarding the possibility of CDS in your pet.

