

What is Pyometra?

Pyometra is a common disease of un-neutered female dogs and cats. The term comes from 'pyo', meaning pus, and 'metra', meaning womb. It is a serious infection in the cavity of the uterus that usually occurs several weeks to months after the end of a season (or heat).

What Causes Pyometra?

The hormonal changes associated with each season make a uterine infection more likely with age. The clinical signs usually develop around six weeks after the season ends. Some hormonal injections, eg: mising injections or injections to postpone heat, can also increase the risk of pyometra.

What Are the Signs of Pyometra?

Pyometra is usually seen in middle aged or older entire females. Initially licking of the vulval area may be noticed, with increased thirst, vomiting, depression and spotting of red-brown to cream vulval discharge on the floor. A pyometra can be **open** or **closed**. An **open** pyometra will drain pus through the vulva and a discharge will be seen, but a **closed** pyometra will not allow the infection to drain because the cervix will be sealed so a discharge may not be evident and the infection will build up quicker, so is potentially more serious.

Rarely, after neutering a small piece of uterus may remain and become infected. This is called a 'stump pyometra' and is less severe than a normal pyometra, but still requires treatment.

Your vet will ask you questions about your pet's history to establish the diagnosis, but will likely also recommend blood tests and x-rays or ultrasound to confirm the problem.

How Will the Vet Treat My Pet?

Once the diagnosis has been confirmed, surgery is usually advised for treatment of pyometra. In certain cases drugs may be used to empty the uterus of infection instead.

Occasionally the surgery may be delayed to ensure the animal is fit enough for the anaesthetic because the blood poisoning associated with the condition can affect other body organs leading to, for example, kidney failure, thereby increasing the anaesthetic risk.

Usually animals do very well with treatment, but it is a serious life threatening condition and sometimes the illness is too severe for the animal to survive.

How Can I Prevent Pyometra?

The best way to prevent pyometra is through neutering at an early age. Any female animal with a uterus can suffer from this condition and breeding does not offer any protection.



Quick Reference Guide

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