



Australian Shepherd Health & Genetics Institute, Inc

1338 Trouville Ave,
Grover Beach,
CA 93433

Tel: 805-473-0093
www.ashgi.org



Addison's and Cushing's

Addison's Disease, sometimes called hypoadrenocorticism can be a primary autoimmune disease that attacks the adrenal glands or secondary to pituitary disease or steroid therapy. It mostly affects young to middle-aged females but can occur in either gender or at any age. Dogs with Addison's may exhibit various types of gastrointestinal distress, lethargy, neuromuscular effects, low body temperature, low heart rate, or hindquarter pain. The disease is easily mistaken for a variety of other conditions including infections, poisoning, seizure disorders and pancreatic tumors.

Addison's tends to be underdiagnosed in dogs, so ruling-out other potential causes of its symptoms is important. Positive diagnosis is made with an ACTH stimulation test. The disease can be treated with medication. Long term care requires limiting stress.

Addison's Disease is a type of autoimmune disease. Autoimmune diseases are genetically predisposed; if a dog has the disease, it has the genes. Dogs affected with Addison's should not be bred. Their near relatives should not be bred to mates with a family history of any autoimmune disease.

Cushing's Disease, or hyperadrenocorticism, causes the adrenal gland to produce too much cortisol, a natural steroid. Cushing's is one of the most common endocrine disorders in dogs. Most cases of Cushing's are caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary; the balance stem from adrenal gland tumors. About half of those tumors are malignant. Cushing's can be inherited, though not in all cases. Affected dogs can have gastrointestinal problems, hypertension, gain weight, hair loss and skin problems. Depending on the root cause of the disease, surgery may be necessary. In all cases, life-long care and veterinary follow-up are needed.

Cushing's is thought to be inherited in some breeds. It is relatively rare in Australian Shepherds, but should there be more than one case in a group of related dogs it should be assumed to be hereditary. In that case affected dogs should not be bred and healthy relatives need to be bred to mates with no family history of Cushing's Disease.