

Constipation: Fiber to the Rescue?



The causes of constipation include diet, environmental disturbances, colonic obstruction, electrolyte imbalances, iatrogenic disease, and neuromuscular disease. Treatment involves identifying and eliminating the cause, along with medical (laxatives, enemas, prokinetic agents) and/or surgical management.

Incorporation of insoluble and/or soluble fiber into the diet is commonly recommended, either as a purpose-formulated high-fiber diet or by supplementing the existing diet with fiber. Psyllium is a soluble fiber with low fermentability; the husk contains polysaccharide and nonpolysaccharide components that exude a hydrophilic mucilaginous gel on lubrication, thereby increasing fecal bulk. Additional water-holding properties also increase stool bulk.

Two prospective, uncontrolled, open-label field trials were conducted to assess the efficacy of a fiber-supplemented food containing psyllium husks as the principal fiber source for managing constipated cats. Cats refractory to previous therapy were included. In trial 1 ($n = 15$), no additional therapy was used; in trial 2 ($n = 51$), additional therapy was initially allowed but subsequently withdrawn if possible. Cats were assessed 1 and 2 months after starting the diet. Response to therapy was determined by changes in fecal scores and reported response to therapy, as judged by the owner. Results from both trials indicated that the test diet was palatable and well tolerated, that clinical remission was noted in the majority of cats, and that other symptomatic therapy was either not required or could often be discontinued or reduced without recurrence of clinical signs.

Commentary

Nothing is worse than being presented with an obstipated cat that needs an enema. Addressing the underlying cause—often renal disease with associated dehydration—and selecting a long-term management plan to prevent future episodes can vary on a case-by-case basis.

Typically, I recommend starting affected cats on either a low-residue diet to decrease fecal production or a canned formula to increase water intake before trying a fiber supplement. However, any dietary therapy must be introduced gradually to prevent food-avoidance behavior. If fiber therapy is found to be helpful and the cat does not need to be on a therapeutic diet for another problem (eg, renal disorder), a psyllium-enriched, palatable diet may be the solution.—*Sandra Sawchuk, DVM, MS*

Source

Uncontrolled study assessing the impact of a psyllium-enriched extruded dry diet on faecal consistency in cats with constipation. Freiche V, Houston D, Weese H, et al. *J FELINE MED SURG* 13:903-911, 2011.

CONTINUES

FOR MORE...

See **Treatment of Chronic Gastrointestinal Disease** by Dr. Alexander J. German at cliniciansbrief.com/chronic-GI-treatment-2006

IVERHART MAX®

(ivermectin/pyrantel pamoate/praziquantel)

Chewable Tablets

CAUTION: Federal (US) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

BRIEF SUMMARY: Please consult package insert for complete product information.

Indications: For use in dogs to prevent canine heartworm disease by eliminating the tissue stage of heartworm larvae (*Dirofilaria immitis*) for a month (30 days) after infection and for the treatment and control of roundworms (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonina*), hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum*, *Uncinaria stenocephala*, *Ancylostoma braziliense*), and tapeworms (*Dipylidium caninum*, *Taenia pisiformis*).

WARNINGS: For use in dogs only. Keep this and all drugs out of reach of children. In safety studies, testicular hypoplasia was observed in some dogs receiving 3 and 5 times the maximum recommended dose monthly for 6 months (see Animal Safety). In case of ingestion by humans, clients should be advised to contact a physician immediately. Physicians may contact a Poison Control Center for advice concerning cases of ingestion by humans.

PRECAUTIONS: Use with caution in sick, debilitated, or underweight animals and dogs weighing less than 10 lbs. The safe use of this drug has not been evaluated in pregnant or lactating bitches.

All dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection before starting treatment with IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets, which are not effective against adult *D. immitis*. Infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms and microfilariae before initiating a heartworm prevention program.

While some microfilariae may be killed by the ivermectin in IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets at the recommended dose level, IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets are not effective for microfilariae clearance. A mild hypersensitivity-type reaction, presumably due to dead or dying microfilariae and particularly involving transient diarrhea, has been observed in clinical trials with ivermectin alone after treatment of some dogs that have circulating microfilariae.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: In clinical field trials with ivermectin/pyrantel pamoate, vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours of dosing was rarely observed (1.1% of administered doses). The following adverse reactions have been reported following the use of ivermectin: depression/lethargy, vomiting, anorexia, diarrhea, mydriasis, ataxia, staggering, convulsions and hypersalivation.

ANIMAL SAFETY: Studies with ivermectin indicate that certain dogs of the Collie breed are more sensitive to the effects of ivermectin administered at elevated dose levels (more than 16 times the target use level of 6 mcg/kg) than dogs of other breeds. At elevated doses, sensitive dogs showed adverse reactions which included mydriasis, depression, ataxia, tremors, drooling, paresis, recumbency, excitability, stupor, coma and death. No signs of toxicity were seen at 10 times the recommended dose (27.2 mcg/lb) in sensitive Collies. Results of these studies and bioequivalence studies support the safety of ivermectin products in dogs, including Collies, when used as recommended by the label.

In a laboratory safety study, 12-week-old Beagle puppies receiving 3 and 5 times the recommended dose once weekly for 13 weeks demonstrated a dose-related decrease in testicular maturation compared to controls.

HOW SUPPLIED: IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets are available in four dosage strengths (see **Dosage** section) for dogs of different weights. Each strength comes in a box of 6 chewable tablets and in a box of 12 chewable tablets, packed 10 boxes per display box.

STORAGE CONDITIONS: Store at controlled room temperature of 59°-86° F (15°-30° C). Protect product from light.

For technical assistance or to report adverse drug reactions, please call 1-800-338-3659.

Manufactured by: Virbac AH, Inc. Fort Worth, TX 76137

NADA 141-257, Approved by FDA
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