



Hormone Responsive Urinary Incontinence in Female Dogs

Has Fluffy started leaving a wet spot on the couch where she is napping or on her (your) bed in the mornings? Unfortunately this problem occurs in about 20% of middle-aged and older spayed female dogs. The good news is that there are treatment options.

The cause of urine leakage is a failure of the muscles of the urethra to contract firmly when the pet is very relaxed or sleeping. This lack of muscle tone allows urine to leak out.

Risk factors for this type of incontinence include obesity, spaying, breed, size and conformation. The most commonly affected dogs are 30 pounds or more and middle aged or older.

Diagnosis of Hormone Responsive Urinary Incontinence is based on the history, age and sex of the dog. Other medical problems such as a urinary tract infection, kidney disease, neurologic disease or an anatomic defect must be ruled out. Affected dogs need to have a physical examination, urinalysis and a kidney function test at a minimum.

Treatment Options

1. Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) is an antihistamine-like drug that can be effective in increasing the muscle tone of the urethra and prevent leakage. Side-effects of this drug include hyperexcitability, restlessness and hypertension. This is not a good choice for dogs with heart disease. This drug requires twice daily administration and is available through veterinarians only.
2. Diethylstilbesterol (DES) is a hormone supplement that can be highly effective for this problem. This medication is given once or twice weekly after an initial loading dose. The principal rare side effect of DES is bone marrow suppression, therefore, monitoring lab work should be done annually or semiannually. This drug is not readily available and must be compounded at a pharmacy. The cost is reasonable considering once or twice weekly use.