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Chronic Colitis

Colitis is an inflammation of the large intestine (colon) that disrupts your pet's normal bowel movements. There are several common signs indicative of colitis such as: continuous or intermittent diarrhea, mucus or blood in the stool, and straining to have a bowel movement. There are a variety of causes of colitis, some of the most common include: a parasite known as whipworms; cancerous or inflammatory cells within the cell layers of the colon; fungal, bacterial, and plantlike organisms; food allergies; foreign bodies; stress; polyps or tumors. Many cases are idiopathic, meaning that the cause is unknown. Some cases may result from the animal's immune system attacking that animal's tissues.

Your veterinarian can diagnose your animal with colitis by physical examination involving rectal and abdominal palpation (touching your animal). Other tests may need to be done as well such as testing feces for the presence of parasites, cells, bacteria, and other abnormalities; blood and urine tests; colonoscopy, colon biopsy, and surgery to exam the animal's abdomen. Your veterinarian can inform you which tests will be necessary to determine if your animal has chronic colitis.

In treating a pet with chronic colitis, some cases can be cured but many will have this condition for the remainder of their lifetime. Treating most pets with medication and providing certain food will allow the lesions in the colon to heal and normal bowel movement to return. Once your veterinarian has determined what is causing your pet's colitis, appropriate treatment for this cause can be instituted. Medications can be prescribed by your veterinarian to help relieve diarrhea and inflammation of the colon. Antibiotics may be prescribed since colitis alters the normal population of bacteria that live in your pet's digestive tract. Many of the medications that your veterinarian will prescribe for your animal are quite potent and may have side effects and you should always follow the directions carefully when administering them.