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UVEODERMATOLOGIC SYNDROME

(VKH-like syndrome)

Overview

Uveodermatologic Syndrome is an immune-mediated disease that attacks and destroys pigmented cells in the body and especially affects highly pigmented areas including the eyes and skin. Dogs are typically affected in adulthood and ocular lesions usually precede the dermatological lesions. Prognosis for vision is guarded and therapy is life-long. This condition is similar to the idiopathic condition in humans known as Vogt Koyanagi-Harada (VKH) syndrome.

Commonly Affected Breeds

The disease most commonly affects Akita, Siberian Husky, Samoyed, Australian Shepherd and Shetland Sheepdog but can occur in any breed of dog.

Diagnosis

There are currently no specific diagnostic tests for uveodermatologic syndrome. The diagnosis is based on clinical signs and in some cases, skin biopsy. Ocular clinical signs associated with uveodermatologic syndrome are due to progressive inflammation inside the eye (called uveitis). Squinting, light sensitivity, redness, cloudiness of the eye, and vision loss may result. Vision loss occurs due to chronic uveitis, which can lead to secondary glaucoma, cataract formation or retinal detachment. Ocular signs typically occur before skin disease. The skin abnormalities include progressive loss of pigmentation in the skin and hair, especially around the nose, eyelids, mouth and footpads.

Treatment

To control this immune-mediated disease your veterinary ophthalmologist may work with your primary veterinarian and possibly a veterinary dermatologist. Various medications both topically and systemically can be used to help suppress the overactive immune system. Symptomatic treatment is also initiated to treat the eyes and/or skin. Aggressive initial treatment will be used to help control the inflammation and preserve vision and patients remain on medications long-term. Relapses are frequent if therapy is stopped. Because of the immunosuppressive therapy, periodic rechecks as well as blood work are necessary to monitor for response to therapy and any side effects from therapy.