

Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH)

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What is the prostate?

The prostate is the only accessory sex gland in the male dog. The gland secretes a fluid that aids in the transport of sperm. It is located near the base of the bladder, just below the colon and surrounds the urethra. Your veterinarian is able to feel the prostate to assess its size, symmetry and texture while performing a rectal examination on your pet.

What is benign prostatic hypertrophy?

This is a condition that is commonly seen in older dogs. The cells in the prostate get larger and multiply. They may also form small pockets of fluid within the gland. Due to its association with hormones secreted by the testes, this condition is only seen in intact male dogs. BPH is a natural consequence of aging and many dogs have it without showing any clinical problems.

How will I know if my pet has this condition?

Blood in the urine, a bloody discharge from the penis that is not associated with urination, straining to defecate, producing ribbon-like stools or infertility may be signs that your pet has prostatic disease. Benign prostatic hyperplasia usually does not cause straining, small stools or pain. Your veterinarian will be able to perform a rectal examination and assess whether the prostate is enlarged. Radiographs may also indicate that the prostate is enlarged. An ultrasonographic examination and additional tests such as a urine culture, semen evaluation, or prostatic aspirate, will give further information as to whether the enlarged prostate appears to be due to some other disease process such as infection or cancer. Fluid from the prostate can be attained and assessed under the microscope to help rule out other causes of prostatic enlargement.

What is the treatment?

The permanent treatment for this disease is castration. Studies have shown that the size of the prostate decreases 70% nine weeks post castration. If castration is not an option, there are some medical ways to manage the disease. However, many of these medications have significant side effects and are not permanent solutions or nearly as effective at decreasing the size of the prostate. Finasteride, a human drug for prostatic enlargement, is one effective treatment that does not impact fertility.