

Update on Thyroid Disease, Vaccine Issues, and Nutrition

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Thyroid Disease

Hypothyroidism is the most common endocrine disorder of dogs, and up to 80% of cases result from an autoimmune disease that progressively destroys the thyroid gland (autoimmune thyroiditis). Once more than 75% of the gland is destroyed by this process, classical clinical signs of hypothyroidism appear. Because the condition is heritable, it has significant genetic implications for breeding stock. Accurate diagnosis of the early stages of autoimmune thyroiditis offers important genetic and clinical options for prompt intervention and case management. However, it is often difficult to make a definitive diagnosis.

Vaccine Issues

Modern vaccine technology has permitted us to protect companion animals effectively against serious infectious diseases. However, the challenge to produce effective and safe vaccines for the prevalent infectious diseases of animals has become increasingly difficult. In veterinary medicine, evidence implicating vaccines in triggering immune-mediated and other chronic disorders (vaccinosis) is compelling. While some of these problems have been traced to contaminated or poorly attenuated batches of vaccine that revert to virulence, others apparently reflect the host's genetic predisposition to react adversely upon receiving the single (monovalent) or multiple antigen "combo" (polyvalent) products given routinely to animals. Animals of certain susceptible breeds or families appear to be at increased risk for severe and lingering adverse reactions to vaccines.

Nutrition

Wholesome nutrition is key to maintaining healthy immune function and resistance to disease. Discussion will focus on the basic ingredients and trace vitamins, minerals, and immune-balancing nutrients that promote healthy endocrine and immune function as they apply to health and disease.