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DISKOSPONDYLITIS

Diskospondylitis refers to *an infection of the intervertebral disc and the surrounding vertebral endplates that is usually caused by bacteria*, with the most commonly seen bacteria of *Staphylococcus* spp. **Diskospondylitis** most commonly occurs in medium to giant breed dogs but can be seen in small breeds and cats as well.

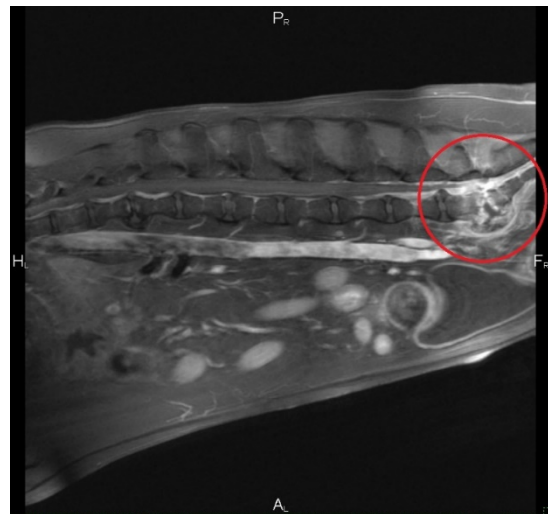
The infectious organism may gain access to the disc space and vertebrae through:

Direct inoculation (migration of a foreign object, infection developing following spinal surgery, a wound near the spine, paravertebral injection)

Indirectly from a skin, ear, oral, kidney, prostate or blood-borne infections.

Signs and symptoms of the disease are fairly nonspecific but usually include an overt hypersensitivity associated with the location of the spinal lesion. Nonspecific symptoms include decreased appetite, weight loss, depression, fever, and a reluctance to move.

Diskospondylitis is usually able to be diagnosed with radiographic imaging (x-ray) but CT or MRI may be necessary for more severe cases. It can only be diagnosed on radiographs if lysis (disintegration) of the bone is greater than 70%. Blood and urine culture and sensitivity tests may be necessary to determine the type of infectious organism so the correct medications can be prescribed. Usually, patients are treated with antibiotics for several months to potentially over a year because it is such a deep infection. Pain medications are also usually prescribed for the first few weeks during the initial antibiotic treatment period. Most dogs will have a simple bacterial infection that is cleared with antibiotics. A small number of dogs will have a more serious infection such as brucellosis or fungal diskospondylitis. Unfortunately, these types of infection have a worse prognosis.



In general patients usually improve after the first week on antibiotics, serial radiographs are taken every 3 to 4 months to monitor progress of the disease. Probiotics may also be recommended to help with any potential stomach upset that can come with long term antibiotic use.