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STROKE

A stroke, or cerebrovascular accident, is the term used for a sudden neurologic deficit resulting from compromised blood flow to the brain.

Signs commonly seen in patients that have suffered a stroke can include head tilt or turn, loss of balance, loss of vision, circling, falling, and in rare cases seizures. Often these signs are very different from what we would typically see in human stroke victims.

Ideally, imaging with MRI is used to help diagnose a stroke. Once a diagnosis has been made for a stroke, further testing is recommended to look for the underlying causes for the event. Despite thorough investigation, an underlying cause is usually only found in about 50% of patients. However, if a disease process is found, it could aid not only in the specific treatment recommended, but also in preventing further strokes from occurring in the future.

There are two different types of stroke:

Ischemic Stroke	Hemorrhagic Stroke
Definition: blood flow to an area of tissue is compromised due to an obstruction	Definition: bleeding results from the rupture of intracranial blood vessels
Ischemic strokes can be seen in patients with kidney disease, heart disease, hypo or hyperthyroidism, Cushing’s disease, diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), polycythemia (increased blood viscosity), or neoplasia (cancer). Other less common causes of blockage of the blood vessels supplying the brain include fat or tumor embolism, parasites, or spinal cartilage.	Hemorrhagic strokes can be seen in disease that interfere with blood clotting such as rodenticide ingestion, immune-mediated thrombocytopenia, congenital clotting disorders, hypertension (potentially secondary to cardiac disease, kidney disease, thyroid disease, or Cushing’s), tumors, and Vasculitis (inflammation of the arteries).

Treatment for strokes is largely supportive, but medications may be used to decrease risk of other strokes in the future and to treat any underlying conditions. Prognosis can be good for many animals, but full recovery can take several months, and patients may have residual neurologic deficits that do not fully resolve (such as a head tilt or vision loss).