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Clinical findings and results of diagnostic imaging in 82 dogs with gastrointestinal ulceration

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Abstract

Objectives: To describe clinical and imaging findings in dogs with confirmed gastrointestinal (GI) ulceration, to compare findings in dogs with perforated and non-perforated ulcers, and to estimate the sensitivities of radiography, ultrasonography and computed tomography (CT) for GI ulceration and perforation, respectively.

Methods: Retrospective review of medical records of 82 dogs that had a macroscopic ulcer in the gastric or intestinal mucosa visualised directly at endoscopy, surgery or necropsy and had survey radiography, ultrasonography or a CT scan of the abdomen during the same period of hospitalisation.

Results: The most frequent clinical signs were vomiting in 88% dogs, haematemesis in 32%, melena in 31% and weight loss in 7%. The most frequent imaging findings in dogs with non-perforated ulcers were GI mural lesion in 56%, mucosal defect compatible with an ulcer in 44% and peritoneal fluid in 21%. In dogs with perforated ulcers the most frequent imaging findings were peritoneal fluid in 83%, GI mural lesion in 48%, peritoneal gas in 31% and mucosal defect compatible with an ulcer in 29%. Sensitivities of radiography, ultrasonography and CT were 30%, 65% and 67% in dogs with non-perforated ulcers and 79%, 86% and 93% in dogs with perforated ulcers, respectively.

Clinical impact: In dogs with non-perforated ulcers, survey radiography was usually negative whereas ultrasonography and CT frequently enabled detection of the site of the ulcer; in dogs with perforated ulcers, radiography was frequently positive for peritoneal gas and CT was a relatively sensitive modality for both the ulcer and signs of perforation.

Key words: diagnostic imaging, dog, gastrointestinal disease, peritonitis, ulceration
Introduction

Gastrointestinal (GI) ulceration in dogs is a well-recognised condition that may occur following administration of anti-inflammatory drugs (Cariou and others 2009, Dayer and others 2013, Enberg and others 2006, Lascelles and others 2005, Monteiro-Steagall and others 2013, Stanton and Bright 1989) or corticosteroids (Rohrer and others 1999, Neiger and others 2000), ingestion of sharp foreign objects or magnets (Hickey and Magee 2011), strenuous exercise (Davis and others 2006, Ritchey and others 2011), primary gastrointestinal neoplasia (Gualtieri and others 1999, von Babo and others 2012), mastocytosis (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989), inflammatory bowel disease (Jergens and others 1992, Rallis and others 1998), hepatic disease (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989), uraemia (Peters and others 2005) or without any apparent predisposing condition. Dogs with GI ulceration may present with acute abdominal signs, including pain, distension or vomiting, or with vague and non-specific signs including lethargy, inappetence, weakness and collapse (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989).

Dogs in which a GI ulcer has perforated are liable to develop septic peritonitis, have associated higher mortality and are candidates for prompt surgical exploration and treatment (Boag and Hughes 2004, Dayer and others 2013); however, clinical diagnosis of perforated ulcer is not straightforward because the presenting signs are variable and the results of haematology and biochemistry are unlikely to indicate surgery (Hinton and others 2002, Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989). Furthermore certain other tests that may be employed in a dog presenting with acute abdominal signs can be misleading. For example, canine specific pancreatic lipase is falsely positive in up to 40% dogs presenting as an acute abdomen (Hanworth et al 2014). The routine use of focussed abdominal ultrasound scan for peritoneal fluid (‘FAST’ scan) in the Emergency Room facilitates detection of peritoneal fluid in acute patients (Lisciandro 2011, McMurray et al. 2015). When peritoneal fluid is identified, ultrasound-guided paracentesis enables prompt detection of signs of septic peritonitis, such as intracellular bacteria in white blood cells, and
low glucose or high lactate concentration in peritoneal fluid compared to blood or plasma (Bonczynski et al 2003, Cortellini and others 2015, Koenig and Verlander 2015).

More thorough diagnostic imaging is indicated in dogs presenting with acute, worsening or persistent abdominal signs. Compared to studies about clinicopathologic testing and management, there have been relatively few studies about the imaging signs associated with GI ulceration. Although GI ulceration is not usually visible in survey radiographs, pneumoperitoneum is a critical radiographic sign of GI perforation (Day and Pechman 2012, Smelstoys and others 2004).

Radiographs made with a horizontal x-ray beam and the dog in either dorsal or left lateral recumbency are considered the most sensitive for detection of pneumoperitoneum (Day and Pechman 2012). Detection of gastric ulcers is also possible using contrast radiography (Barber 1982, Evans and Laufer 1981, Stanton and Bright 1989, Terragni and others 2014), but this technique has been used less frequently since the introduction of ultrasonography.

Ultrasonographic signs of ulcer associated with GI neoplasms and signs of GI perforation in dogs have been reported. Ulcers may be recognised ultrasonographically as a mucosal defect located in the centre of a thickened region of the gastric or intestinal wall containing a collection of small echoes, most likely representing bubbles (Lamb and Grierson 1999, Paoloni and others 2002, Penninck and others 1997). A review of ultrasonographic findings in 14 dogs and 5 cats with GI perforation found regional hyperechoic mesenteric fat in 100%, peritoneal fluid in 84% and peritoneal air in 47% (Boysen and others 2003). These results suggest that ultrasonography could be a sensitive method for diagnosis of GI perforation; however, other studies have found problems with the ultrasonographic diagnosis of both GI ulceration and perforation. For example, signs of gastric neoplasia were identified ultrasonographically in only 58% (von Babo and others 2012) and 50% (Marolf and others 2015) affected dogs and cats. In dogs with perforated ulcer, the findings of peritoneal fluid, hyperechoic mesentery and hypoechoic mass-like lesions adjacent to the stomach could be misinterpreted as pancreatitis (Manzur and Voros 2000). In a review of dogs that had
exploratory laparotomy, GI ulceration or perforation were the lesions most likely to be missed by ultrasonography (Pastore and others 2007).

Computed tomography (CT) is a well-established modality for investigation of GI bleeding in humans (Horton & Fishman 2004, Lee and others 2011, Soto and others 2015), but there are no published reports of use of CT in dogs with suspected GI ulceration.

The purpose of the present study was to review the medical records of a series of dogs with GI ulceration in order to describe their presenting signs and imaging findings, to compare findings in dogs with perforated and non-perforated ulcers, and to estimate the sensitivities of survey radiography, ultrasonography and CT for GI ulceration and perforation, respectively.

Methods

For this retrospective case series study, electronic medical records of the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals (QMHA) between September 2006 and March 2016 were reviewed. The criteria for inclusion were dogs that had an ulcer in the gastric or intestinal mucosa identified by direct visual inspection at endoscopy, surgery or necropsy and had FAST scan, radiography, ultrasonography or a CT scan of the abdomen during the same period of hospitalisation. For the purposes of this study, ulcer is defined as a focal absence of the gastric or intestinal mucosa.

FAST scans were done by Emergency Room veterinarians using a DP-50 ultrasound machine (Mindray DS USA Inc., Mahwah, NJ, USA) and following the previously described protocol (Boysen and Lisciandro 2013). Radiography was done using a conventional diagnostic x-ray machine (Sedecal 32kW x-ray generator and Toshiba x-ray tube) and either a computed radiography (Capsula XL, Fuji, Bedford, UK) or digital radiography system (TruDR, SoundEklin, Carlsbad, CA, USA). Radiographs were made with vertical x-ray beam in all dogs with additional radiographs in selected cases made with a horizontal x-ray beam and the dog in lateral recumbency to look for pneumoperitoneum (Day and Pechman 2012). Ultrasonography was done by a board-certified radiologist or a radiology
resident working under their direct observation using 2-6MHz curvilinear, 5-8.5MHz curvilinear, 5-
8MHz vector array or 5-14 MHz linear transducers (Sequoia 512, Siemens Healthcare Limited,
Camberley, Surrey). Dogs had ultrasonography in right and left lateral recumbency and were usually
restrained manually. CT scans were done using a 16-slice MDCT scanner (MX 8000 IDT, Philips
Medical Systems, Cleveland, USA). CT settings were helical acquisition, slice thickness 3mm, image
reconstruction interval 1.5mm, helical pitch 0.688, tube rotation time 0.75s, x-ray tube current 150
mAs, x-ray tube potential 120kVp, field of view 320-400mm, matrix 512x512 and medium frequency
(‘soft tissue’) reconstruction algorithm. CT image series of the abdomen were obtained before and
60 seconds after the start of intravenous injection of 2ml/kg of iohexol 300mg/ml (Omnipaque 300,
GE Healthcare, Oslo, Norway). Dogs were anaesthetised or sedated for CT and placed in sternal
recumbency.

Data extracted from the medical records included signalment, history, clinical signs, results of
haematology and serum chemistry, results of FAST scan, radiography, ultrasonography or CT scan,
site of ulcer, final diagnosis and survival to discharge.

Imaging findings were extracted from contemporaneous reports written by 6 different Board-
certified radiologists employed at the QMHA during the period of study. Imaging studies were also
reviewed on a workstation using commercially available DICOM image viewing software (OsiriX 64-
bite, version 5.2.2, Pixmeo, Switzerland) after retrieval from PACS. For each modality, images were
evaluated for the presence of peritoneal fluid or gas, signs of a gastrointestinal mural lesion, mucosal
defect compatible with an ulcer and the site (if applicable) of an ulcer. Any of these findings was
considered a positive (i.e. abnormal) result with respect to the diagnosis of gastrointestinal
ulceration.

Results
Records were found of 192 dogs that had a clinical diagnosis of GI ulceration. Of these, 82 dogs had a GI ulcer confirmed by endoscopy in 26 (32%) instances, laparotomy in 49 (60%) and necropsy in 7 (8%). The remainder did not have investigations to confirm an ulcer and were excluded.

There were 51 (62%) males (28 neutered) and 31 (38%) females (25 neutered). Their median age was 7.9y (range 6m – 13y). The most frequent breeds were golden retriever (10, 12%), Labrador retriever (9, 11%), Staffordshire bull terrier (9, 11%), mixed-breeds (8, 10%), English springer spaniel (6, 7%), Boxer dogs (4, 5%) and Doberman (3, 4%). There were 29 other breeds with one or two affected dogs. Sites of GI ulcers were stomach in 42 dogs (51%), duodenum in 23 (28%), jejunum in six (7%), ileum in one (1%), small intestine, exact site not specified in four (5%), caecum in one (1%), colon in four (5%) and ulcers in both duodenum and colon in one (1%). Based on findings at surgery or necropsy, ulcers were perforated in 48 (59%) dogs. Ulcers in intestinal sites were perforated more frequently than ulcers in the stomach (28/40 versus 20/42).

The median duration of clinical signs prior to presentation was 10 days (range 1 day-1 year). Prior administration of non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) was reported in 37 (45%) dogs and prior administration of corticosteroids was reported in 9 (11%) dogs. Of the NSAIDs used, meloxicam was the most prevalent (in 52% instances) followed by carprofen (14%), firocoxib (14%), cimicoxib (11%), troxoxil (6%) and mavacoxib (3%). One dog had received both NSAIDs and steroids.

The most frequently reported clinical signs were vomiting in 72 (88%) dogs, haematemesis in 26 (32%), melena in 25 (31%), lethargy in 7 (9%) and weight loss in 6 (7%). Ten (12%) dogs had both haematemesis and melena. Similar numbers of dogs presented with elevated (27, 33%), normal (30, 37%) and subnormal rectal temperature (25, 30%). Haematemesis occurred more frequently in dogs with gastric ulcers than intestinal ulcers (18/42 versus 8/40). Melena and weight loss occurred more frequently in dogs with non-perforated ulcers than perforated ulcers (17/34 versus 8/48, and 5/34 versus 1/48, respectively).
Anaemia (haematocrit <0.37) was found in 34 (41%) dogs. Anaemia occurred more frequently in dogs with a long duration of clinical signs than dogs with short duration of signs (18/26 versus 14/44). Blood lactate concentration was increased (>2.5mmol/L) in 16/50 (32%) dogs in which it was determined. Peritoneal fluid was detected more frequently in dogs with perforated ulcers than non-perforated ulcers (38/48 versus 7/34). Peritoneal fluid was submitted for analysis in 34 (41%) instances. All peritoneal fluid samples had evidence of inflammation and 19 (56%) had cytological evidence of intracellular bacteria, all in samples from dogs with perforated ulcers. One dog with a perforated gastric ulcer had peritonitis associated with *Candida* spp.

FAST scan, survey radiography, ultrasonography and CT were done in 39 (48%), 34 (41%), 62 (76%) and 17 (21%) dogs, respectively. In 5 dogs, abdominal radiographs included a horizontal x-ray beam view. Multiple imaging modalities (i.e. radiography and ultrasonography or radiography and CT or ultrasonography and CT) were employed in 42 (51%) dogs. The most frequent first imaging modality was FAST scan (figure 1). The majority of dogs having FAST scan then had either radiography or ultrasonography. There were only small numbers of dogs in which results of radiography and ultrasonography (n=23) or radiography and CT (n=5) or ultrasonography and CT (n=7) could be compared, hence statistical testing of differences in sensitivity was not considered appropriate.

Based on classification of peritoneal fluid, peritoneal gas, GI mural lesion and mucosal defect compatible with an ulcer as positive results for imaging, the sensitivities of FAST scan, radiography, ultrasonography and CT were 17%, 30%, 65% and 67% in dogs with non-perforated ulcers and 79%, 79%, 86% and 93% in dogs with perforated ulcers, respectively (tables 1 and 2, figures 2-5).

The most frequent imaging findings in dogs with non-perforated ulcers were GI mural lesion in 19/34 (56%), mucosal defect compatible with an ulcer in 15/34 (44%) and peritoneal fluid in 7/34 (21%). In dogs with perforated ulcers the most frequent imaging findings were peritoneal fluid in 40/48 (83%), GI mural lesion in 23/48 (48%), peritoneal gas in 15/48 (31%) and mucosal defect compatible with an ulcer in 14/48 (29%). Imaging abnormalities were found in 22/34 (65%) dogs with non-perforated
ulcers compared to 47/48 (98%) dogs with perforated ulcers. Peritoneal fluid was observed more frequently in dogs with perforated ulcers than in dogs with non-perforated ulcers, and peritoneal gas was observed only in dogs with perforated ulcers. Additional imaging findings were dilatation of intestine in 10 dogs (2 on radiography, 7 on ultrasonography and 1 on CT), hyperdense streaking of abdominal fat in CT images of 7 dogs, foreign body in 5 dogs (1 on radiography, 2 on ultrasonography and 2 on CT), hyperechoic abdominal fat in ultrasound images of 4 dogs and barium extravasation in the only dog that had contrast radiography of the GI tract.

All ulcers were examined histologically. A primary cause of GI ulceration was identified in 41/82 (50%) dogs, including primary GI neoplasia in 17/82 (42%) dogs, inflammatory GI disease in 15/82 (37%) and intestinal foreign body in 9/82 (22%) (table 3). In the remaining 41 dogs, a specific cause of the ulceration was not identified, although 19/41 (46%) of these had a history of prior NSAID administration and 3/41 (7%) had a history of prior corticosteroid administration. Of the 82 dogs in this study, 58 dogs (71%) survived to discharge and 24 (29%) died or were euthanized.

Discussion

The frequency of prior administration of NSAIDs in dogs in the present study is compatible with previous reports that this is a major predisposing cause for GI ulceration in dogs (Cariou and others 2009, Enberg and others 2006, Dayer and others 2013, Lascelles and others 2005, Monteiro-Steagall and others 2013, Stanton and Bright 1989). The predominance of vomiting, haematemesis and melena in dogs with GI ulceration corresponds with the findings of previous studies (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989). Haematemesis occurred more frequently in dogs with gastric ulcers than intestinal ulcers. Melena and weight loss occurred more frequently in dogs with non-perforated ulcers than perforated ulcers, whereas peritoneal fluid occurred more frequently in dogs with perforated ulcers.
In the present study, peritoneal fluid was an important sign of perforated GI ulcers and the finding of intracellular bacteria in peritoneal fluid samples was diagnostic. It should be emphasised that determination of the cellular and protein content of peritoneal fluid relies on abdominocentesis because these properties cannot be deduced consistently from the ultrasonographic features.

Peritoneal fluid in animals with peritonitis may be hyperechoic or anechoic (Spaulding 1993, Boysen and others 2003, Lewis and O’Brien 2010, Feeney and others 2013). In the present study echogenicity of peritoneal fluid was not recorded.

Although dogs with perforated ulcers may be expected to have peritonitis, this can be difficult to detect clinically. Peritonitis associated with a perforated GI ulcer may be contained by omental adhesions and consequently there may be no peritoneal fluid or other signs to suggest perforation (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989). Similarly, translocation of bacteria across the gastric or intestinal wall can occur because of wall damage or immune deficiency (Opal and Cross 2005), so finding intracellular bacteria in peritoneal fluid sample is not specific for perforated GI ulcer. When intracellular bacteria are found in peritoneal fluid, but no signs of ulcer or perforation are found, a diagnosis of primary bacterial peritonitis should be considered (Culp and others 2009).

_Candida_ peritonitis occurred in one dog in the present series. _Candida_ spp. are commensals of the biliary and intestinal tract, but _Candida_ peritonitis has been reported infrequently. In a report of 5 dogs with _Candida_ peritonitis, all had a history of antimicrobial therapy and liver/biliary surgery or gastrointestinal perforation (Bradford and others 2013). Only two of the five dogs in that report survived to discharge. In the present study, the dog with _Candida_ peritonitis had a perforated pyloric ulcer, but survived to discharge.

In the present series, perforated ulcers were found more frequently in the intestine than in the stomach. Other reports have found a greater number of perforated ulcers in the stomach (Lascelles and others 2005) or an even distribution between stomach and intestine (Dayer and others 2013, Hinton and others 2002).
A primary cause for GI ulceration was identified in half the dogs in the present series. The frequency of diagnosis of primary GI neoplasia is compatible with previous studies (Gualtieri and others 1999, Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989, von Babo and others 2012). A higher frequency of inflammatory GI conditions associated with ulceration was observed in the present study compared to previous reports. Also, in contrast to previous studies (Murray and others 1972, Stanton and Bright 1989), there were no dogs with GI ulceration secondary to hepatic disease.

FAST scan was the imaging modality most frequently used first in the present study. In our hospital FAST scan is performed by clinicians in the Emergency Room, hence its use in the present study probably reflects the number of dogs presenting as emergencies, although this was not recorded specifically. The majority of dogs having FAST scan then had either radiography or ultrasonography. In contrast, few dogs had CT only; however, the time span of the present study (10 years) is wide enough that it will encompass changes in clinical practice over time, and the use of imaging modalities summarised here represents their total use during this period rather than current preferences or future trends. For example, FAST scan was introduced during this period and is now used routinely in the Emergency Room. Similarly, the CT scans were done mainly towards the end of the period covered by the study and it is likely, particularly with the apparent high sensitivity observed, that CT will be used more frequently in the future at the expense of radiography and ultrasonography.

The choice of imaging modality for each dog in this series will have been based on the history and clinical signs and the likelihood of specific diagnosis as perceived by the attending clinician(s). The use of a single imaging modality is likely when signs of septic peritonitis have been identified and exploratory laparotomy is indicated as a matter of urgency. Depending on the clinical signs and status of the patient, exploratory laparotomy may be performed after finding intracellular bacteria in peritoneal fluid sample obtained by FAST scan or finding peritoneal gas on survey radiography only, without further imaging. In such cases, additional attempts to confirm the diagnosis (e.g. by using horizontal x-ray beam radiographs) may be considered unnecessary because of the overriding
indication for prompt laparotomy. Alternatively, dogs in which a gastric ulcer is considered likely
may be considered candidates for endoscopy without additional imaging. It is probably those dogs in
which clinical signs are considered non-specific that are most likely to be subjected to more
comprehensive imaging. Compared to a FAST scan, a complete abdominal ultrasound scan is likely to
detect additional features that enable more specific diagnosis. For example, in a dog with peritonitis,
additional ultrasonographic signs could include hyperechoic, complex or localised peritoneal fluid,
corrugation of the small intestinal wall, hyperechoic abdominal fat, peritoneal thickening or
adhesions, an abscess or peritoneal gas (Boysen and others 2003, Feeney and others 2013).
Although the results of this study are likely to be applicable to veterinary referral practice, they
cannot be considered definitive because of limitations associated with the retrospective
methodology. For example, statistical testing of differences in sensitivities of imaging modalities was
not considered appropriate because multiple imaging modalities were employed in approximately
half the dogs in this series, and hence there were relatively few dogs in which results of radiography
and ultrasonography or radiography and CT or ultrasonography and CT could be compared. Such
variability in the management of individual patients is unavoidable (and appropriate) in clinical
practice, but it prevents robust estimates of the sensitivity of imaging modalities and comparisons
between results of other studies, as previously noted (Dayer and others 2013). For example, the
potential for increased sensitivity for pneumoperitoneum by consistent use of horizontal x-ray beam
radiographs cannot be assessed. Despite these limitations, various trends in the performance of the
different imaging modalities may be identified: in dogs with non-perforated ulcers radiography was
usually negative whereas ultrasonography and CT frequently enabled detection of the site of the
ulcer; in dogs with perforated ulcers, radiography was frequently positive for peritoneal gas and CT
was a relatively sensitive modality for both the ulcer and signs of perforation. Pneumoperitoneum is
an important radiographic sign of GI perforation (Hinton and others 2002, Smelstoys and others
2004), but may be also observed in animals without GI perforation, following blunt or penetrating
abdominal trauma, laparotomy (Probst and others 1986) or rupture of the urinary bladder (Saunders and Tobias 2003). None of the cases presented in this study had a history of trauma.

A gastric or intestinal ulcer is unlikely to be visible in survey radiographs; however, duodenal pseudoulcers may be observed in survey radiographs, particularly in dogs positioned in left lateral recumbency (Vander Hart and Berry 2015). These structures, which may also be identifiable in ultrasound and CT images, may be distinguished from true ulcers because they are normally multiple, evenly spaced and occur on the anti-mesenteric border of the descending duodenum, whereas the majority of duodenal ulcers occur near the cranial duodenal flexure and pyloric canal (Stanton and Bright 1989).

As noted above, clinical or imaging signs of GI perforation should be considered an indication for exploratory laparotomy as a matter of urgency and a contraindication for a radiographic contrast study, which could delay definitive diagnosis and treatment. Barium contrast studies of the GI tract should be avoided in animals with suspected GI perforation because of the possibility of barium extravasation, which could exacerbate the peritonitis (Ko and Mann 2014). Based on the findings of the present study, CT may be considered advantageous because it appears to be a sensitive test for both primary and secondary lesions in dogs with GI perforation and avoids the need for contrast radiography.

No conflicts of interest have been declared.
Table 1. Sensitivities of imaging modalities in dogs with gastrointestinal ulceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>FAST</th>
<th>Radiography</th>
<th>Ultrasonography</th>
<th>CT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-perforated ulcer</td>
<td>1/6 (17%)</td>
<td>3/10 (30%)</td>
<td>22/34 (65%)</td>
<td>2/3 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perforated ulcer</td>
<td>26/33 (79%)</td>
<td>19/24 (79%)</td>
<td>24/28 (86%)</td>
<td>13/14 (93%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FAST, focussed abdominal ultrasound scan for peritoneal fluid; CT, computed tomography

Sensitivity = number of dogs with positive result for imaging/number of dogs subjected to imaging
Table 2. Major imaging findings in 82 dogs with gastrointestinal ulceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>FAST</th>
<th>Radiography</th>
<th>Ultrasonography</th>
<th>CT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-perforated ulcer (n=34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peritoneal fluid</td>
<td>1/6 (17%)</td>
<td>3/10 (30%)</td>
<td>7/34 (21%)</td>
<td>0/3 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peritoneal gas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0/10 (0%)</td>
<td>0/34 (0%)</td>
<td>0/3 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal mural lesion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/10 (10%)</td>
<td>19/34 (56%)</td>
<td>2/3 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer visualised</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/10 (10%)</td>
<td>14/34 (41%)</td>
<td>1/3 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perforated ulcer (n=48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peritoneal fluid</td>
<td>26/33 (79%)</td>
<td>13/24 (54%)</td>
<td>23/28 (82%)</td>
<td>10/14 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peritoneal gas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9/24 (38%)</td>
<td>3/28 (11%)</td>
<td>8/14 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal mural lesion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3/24 (13%)</td>
<td>14/28 (50%)</td>
<td>11/14 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer visualised</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0/24 (0%)</td>
<td>4/28 (14%)</td>
<td>11/14 (79%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FAST, focussed abdominal ultrasound scan for peritoneal fluid; CT, computed tomography
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>322</td>
<td>Table 3. Primary diagnoses in 82 dogs with gastrointestinal ulceration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324</td>
<td>Primary gastrointestinal neoplasia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>325</td>
<td>Carcinoma</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>326</td>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>327</td>
<td>Adenocarcinoma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>328</td>
<td>Mastocytoma</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>329</td>
<td>Leiomyoma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330</td>
<td>Spindle cell tumour</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>331</td>
<td>Neoplasm, type not determined</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>332</td>
<td>Inflammatory gastrointestinal disease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333</td>
<td>Lymphocytic/plasmacytic enteritis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>334</td>
<td>Gastritis, non-specific</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335</td>
<td>Ulcerative colitis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>336</td>
<td>Eosinophilic duodenitis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>337</td>
<td>Foreign body</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>Necrosis, non-specific</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>339</td>
<td>Primary cause not identified</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


ulceration or erosion, and strenuous exercise in racing Alaskan sled dogs. *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* **20**, 835-839


Legends

Figure 1. Schematic showing use of imaging modalities in dogs with gastrointestinal ulceration. The arrows indicate numbers of dogs subjected to imaging and the sequence of imaging for dogs having multiple studies. The most frequent first imaging modality was FAST scan, although the majority of dogs having FAST scan then had either radiography (XR) or ultrasonography (US). The majority of dogs having radiography also had ultrasonography.
Figure 2. Example of radiographic signs in a dog with non-perforated gastric ulcer. Detail of a ventrodorsal radiograph showing a mass (arrowheads) affecting the greater curvature of the stomach with a central gas lucency (*) compatible with an ulcer.
Figure 3. Example of radiographic signs in a dog with perforated intestinal ulcer. A) Lateral radiograph showing loss of serosal detail and scattered small bubbles of gas that appear to be outside the intestinal lumen (arrowheads). B) Left lateral recumbent radiograph with horizontal x-ray beam showing peritoneal gas (*) adjacent to the non-dependent abdominal wall.
Figure 4. Examples of ultrasonographic signs in dogs with gastrointestinal ulcers. A) Thickened and hypoechoic gastric wall (GW) and irregular extension of gas (arrowhead) compatible with ulcer. B) Comparison image of the adjacent unaffected gastric wall in the same dog showing normal thickness, layered appearance and rugae on the mucosal aspect, which is outlined by gas in the gastric lumen (L) S, spleen. C) Image of the pyloric canal (P) with eccentrically located gas bubbles (arrowheads) and adjacent fluid collection (*), which is surrounded by hyperechoic fat. D) Peritoneal gas (between arrowheads) partially obscuring the left kidney in an image obtained with the transducer on the non-dependent aspect of the abdomen.
Figure 5. Examples of computed tomographic signs in dogs with gastrointestinal ulcers. A) Transverse post-contrast image showing focal thickening of the lesser curvature of the stomach (arrowheads) and focal mucosal defect (arrow) in a dog with non-perforated gastric ulcer. B) Transverse post-contrast image of a different dog showing small gas bubbles within the duodenal wall at the site of an ulcer (arrow) and multiple small gas bubbles (arrowheads), a large gas collection (G) and fluid (F) in the peritoneal cavity in a dog with perforated ulcer. Abdominal fat has a streaky appearance (*) and increased attenuation as a result of inflammation.