Letter for the vet record.

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Potential outbreak of prolific vomiting in dogs

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Vomiting is a frequent cause for presentation of dogs to veterinary practice, frequently mild and self-limiting (Singleton et al, 2019). However, recently SAVSNET has become aware of reports from veterinary surgeons of acute onset prolific vomiting in dogs in various parts of the UK. We are working to investigate this potential outbreak.

Affected dogs are described as vomiting prolifically (five or more episodes in a 12-hour period) with prolonged lethargy and inappetence, and can sometimes have diarrhoea. Affected dogs usually make a full recovery with routine symptomatic veterinary therapy. There is no known risk to people or other animals, including cats. There is some anecdotal evidence that affected dogs can transmit the disease to other dogs with which they have close contact. It therefore makes sense for owners and vets to handle suspect cases carefully, and limit contact between affected and unaffected dogs.

Data collected by SAVSNET practices strongly suggests this is beyond normal seasonal enteric disease fluctuation, probably starting around November 2019, and that cats do not appear to be similarly affected (figure 1). Our analysis of laboratory data suggests there is no extraordinary increase in known enteric pathogen diagnoses. Although specific pathogens have been mentioned in some media reports, to our knowledge, none are substantiated to date. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated dogs can be affected.

We have established a dedicated website which we will update regularly, which also includes useful guidance on treatment: (<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/savsnet/dog_vomiting_potential_outbreak/>). In order to more fully understand this rapidly evolving situation, we are also asking veterinary surgeons, nurses and owners seeing suspected cases to complete an online questionnaire, which is also available through the website. Veterinary surgeons and nurses are also encouraged to submit equivalent data on unaffected (control) animals to allow us to identify potential risk factors. In addition, we are seeking to collect clinical samples for increased microbiological testing including next generation sequencing if necessary.

We would like to acknowledge the veterinary practices including CVS, as well as diagnostic laboratories, who, by supplying SAVSNET with data are helping transform the way we generate evidence, providing new views of population health. We are also extremely grateful to the Dogs Trust who are part-funding this work, as part of SAVSNET-Agile (https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/savsnet/savsnet-agile/).

References

Singleton DA, Arsevska E, Smyth S, Barker EN, Jewell C, Brant B, Sánchez-Vizcaíno F, Dawson S, Pinchbeck GL, Noble PJM, Jones PH, Radford AD (2019). Small animal disease surveillance: gastrointestinal disease, antibacterial prescription and Tritrichomonas foetus. Veterinary Record 184(7):211-216.

Figure 1: Vets taking part in the SAVSNET project routinely record the main reason for presentation (MPC). The proportion of consultations about gastroenteric disease for dogs and cats is shown for the last three years, suggesting an upsurge in the proportion of GI cases (as a rate per 10,000 total recorded consultations) since Christmas this year in dogs.

