

FACT SHEET

Eclampsia

Eclampsia is a condition that occurs when there is a sudden drop in the level of calcium in the blood. This condition frequently occurs in lactating bitches, usually when the puppies are demanding large quantities of milk at about three to four weeks of age.

Signs and symptoms

Signs include loss of appetite, high temperature, muscle tremors, wobbling on legs and in severe cases, collapse and convulsions.

Prevention

With careful management and the correct amount of good quality nutrition, it is unlikely that a bitch will develop this condition. However, during lactation the bitch must be able to digest and absorb very large amounts of nutrients to produce sufficient milk to support the growth and development of her puppies.

With an average size litter the bitch will require up to three times her normal quantity of food when the pups are 3-4 weeks of age and with a larger than average size litter it follows that the bitch will require more.

Knowledge of the quantity of food required by the lactating bitch is a very important step in the management. She does not require a vitamin or mineral supplement as long as a quality balanced diet is fed. The diet should have a high quality and volume of protein, rather than a diet that is high in fat or carbohydrate, as this can directly effect milk production.

It will be necessary to feed the bitch several times a day, or ad-lib, to ensure she is ingesting enough food. Also encouraging the puppies from 3 weeks of age to eat solid food will reduce the burden on the bitch by reducing the demand for milk.

Treatment

If Eclampsia is severe and the bitch has collapsed or is convulsing then she should be taken to a veterinary surgeon immediately for emergency treatment. Your vet will be able to give her an intravenous infusion of calcium.

If the symptoms are less acute then it may be possible to supplement the bitch with calcium tablets orally. Veterinary advice should also be sought.

How can Naturediet help?

Naturediet Puppy/Junior is recommended for late pregnancy and lactating bitches, as it has a higher concentration of nutrients, including calcium, meaning that the volume of food that needs to be ingested may be less than if fed an adult maintenance menu.

When the bitch is recovering from an eclamptic episode the puppies will need to be fed by bottle with a bitch milk substitute available from pet stores or veterinary surgeries, and at 3 weeks they should start to be encouraged to take solid foods.