

Acute Pneumonia in Irish Wolfhounds

by Michael P Genovese DDS

Over the past few years I have heard horror stories about wolfhounds coming down with acute pneumonia and dying very quickly. I thought I would pass on my own experience in this realm.

I fed early that morning and saw my veteran male eating slowly. He was not ravenous like he usually was. That evening when I came home from work and checked on the dogs I noticed he wanted to be by my side. He was not his exuberant self, vying for attention. I made the food bowls and passed them out. He did not want his food and wanted to stand by me. This was a red flag. I knelt down and listened to him breath. He was laboring a little. I noticed that he stood with his neck straight out and his head slumped a little. I took his temperature and it was normal.

I called the emergency clinic and took him in. The vet at the clinic did his exam and took a chest x ray. There were no infiltrates into his lungs, and they appeared clear. The vet honed in on the size of his heart and said he had cardiomyopathy. I told the vet that, that was not the case. He was in the cardiac study and had a recent echo/ekg and was normal. He had not had any symptoms that would be associated with a heart problem. The vet wanted to keep him overnight and put him on cardiac meds. I pointed out to the vet that the rule of thumb for normal heart size is 5 spinal vertebrae. Bigger than that would be an indication of cardiomyopathy. The heart sounds were normal and his heart rate was within normal limits, as was his blood work.

The emergency vet did not feel he had pneumonia. I had to sign a release to take him. I took him home and called my IW friends for advice. They said it sounded like acute pneumonia to them and that he would really start deteriorating if he was not given a bolus of antibiotic. My take on this is that the infection was of the lower respiratory tract. These infections do not demonstrate symptoms till the infection is pretty far a long. So time is of the essence in these cases. Most vets do not carry the high powered antibiotics in house. A university veterinary hospital will and if not they vet can call it into a local hospital for the human equivalent.

In this case we used Rocephin (ceftriaxone), a 3rd generation cephalosporin. I was able to get this from a local hospital.

We gave him 1g diluted IM. 12 hours later he was back on his food. We continued the Rocephin for 4 days and followed it with Zenequin by weight for 6 weeks.....In actuality after 3 weeks I stopped the Zenequin because he was doing fine. The infection returned and I had to start the Rocephin again. This time I finished the 6 weeks and he was fine. The moral of that story is that lower respiratory infections are hard to get rid of.

Other comparable antibiotics used for acute pneumonias are, also 3rd generation cephalosporins.

Excenel (Cefiofur HCL) 2.2mg/kg Sub Q for 5 to 14 days days followed by Azithromycin or antibiotic your vet recommends.

Naxcel (Cefiofur Sodium) 2.2mg/kg Sub Q 3 to 5 days, response dependant, followed by Azithromycin or antibiotic your vet recommends.

These medications are recommended for IM use in horse and cattle, thus far not for dogs, again depending on the severity of the infection your vet can be a better source if they feel a quicker onset is needed.

This information was obtained via the package inserts on these meds.

This information is to help you and your vet decide the course of treatment for your hound from what has been successful in the past.

Thank you

Michael P Genovese DDS