



ADDISON'S DISEASE

Addison's Disease is a disorder of the adrenal glands in which adrenal hormone production is insufficient. This disease may result from damage to the glands by infection, cancer or drugs, or the cause may be unknown. However, the disease can be managed with the administration of hormones.

Decreased tolerance of stress is the primary characteristic of Addison's Disease due to the fact that the adrenal hormones that are affected by the disease are what enable the body to adapt to stress. Insufficient adrenal hormones can also upset the body's conservation of sodium (salt), reduce circulating blood volume, impair heart and kidney function, damage the heart muscle and cause faulty sugar and fat metabolism.

First signs of the disease can be very vague and may consist of listlessness and possibly vomiting and diarrhea. However, animals are often presented in a shock-like state of collapse known as "Addisonian Crisis".

The only definitive test for Addison's Disease is the ACTH stimulation test. An animal is given an injection of ACTH (which influences the release of adrenal hormones). Blood is then drawn in order to find out the amount of hormones released in response to the ACTH. (This procedure is done in one day, giving the injection and drawing the blood three times at four hour intervals). A normal animal will show an elevation in the amount of hormones released, while an animal with Addison's disease will not have any hormones to respond with.

