

CUSHING'S DISEASE

PET CARE SHEET

Cushing's disease is caused by a high level of the hormone cortisol circulating in the blood. Cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands located close to the kidneys and the amount produced and released is under control of the hormone ACTH produced by the pituitary gland in the brain.

There are 2 forms of Cushing's disease;

Pituitary dependent – the most common form due to a slow growing tumour of the pituitary gland which produces large amounts of ACTH this acts on the adrenal glands to increase production of cortisol

Adrenal dependent – tumour of one or both adrenal glands – leading to direct production of excessive amounts of cortisol.

Clinical signs - not all these signs will be seen in each case

Increased thirst and urination

Increased appetite

Pot belly – due to muscle weakness

Thinned skin and hair loss

Muscle wastage

Lethargy

Diagnosis is made with blood tests

Treatment, usually with tablets which block cortisol production, is often very effective but regular blood test monitoring will be required