HEPATOPATHY

Unlike humans, liver disease is relatively common in cats and dogs, especially with advancing age.

The liver is an extremely important organ in the body, responsible for processing digested food components absorbed from the intestinal tract, cleansing and filtering the blood, breaking down the products of cellular metabolism and presenting them in a form able to be excreted in the faeces or urine. It has many other functions as well.

Like any organ in the body, the liver can become diseased by infection, inflammatory conditions, poisoning, various cancers -either primary or secondary, immune mediated diseases etc.

The clinical symptoms of liver disease can be many and varied, but may include such things as inappetance, lethargy and fever, jaundice, weight loss, increased or decreased thirst and changes in bowel motion consistency, colour, amount etc.

Diagnosis of liver disease is usually based on clinical examination by the veterinarian and blood testing. Ultrasound and radiography may also be useful.

Treatment will depend upon cause, but is usually based around dietary changes and specific medications. Medications may include antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and/or immunosuppressive drugs, drugs to improve the flow of bile, anabolic therapy etc.

Diet is an extremely important part of therapy and is used to either support the liver’s healing processes or decrease the side effects associated with some liver diseases. It generally consists of a low fat, specific protein diet, with higher carbohydrate content.

Hills L/D (Liver diet) comes in a dry and wet food form and is the recommended diet for animals with liver disease. It contains the optimal amounts of nutrients, vitamins and minerals to assist with liver repair, limit ongoing liver damage and toxicity associated with liver disease.

The veterinarian will discuss diet with you. Frequent rechecks and blood tests are often necessary to monitor liver function and repair.