

Renal Dysplasia: An Inherited Abnormality of Kidneys in Puppies

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Renal dysplasia is an inherited trait and has been diagnosed in many breeds including Samoyeds, Alaskan Malamutes, Norwegian Elkhounds, Lhasa Apsos, Shih-tzus, Cocker Spaniels, Standard Poodles, Doberman Pinschers, and Wheaton Terriers. A patient with renal dysplasia will have one or both improperly developed kidneys. They are frequently undersized and not capable of adequately filtering the blood, conserving water, and ridding the body of metabolic wastes. Both males and females may be affected.



What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may be noted as young as several weeks, however, most cases encountered are in older puppies, usually after six months of age. Due to the kidneys' inability to conserve water, notable signs frequently include an increased thirst and urination. Signs may be subtle if only one kidney is involved. In advanced or more severely affected patients, one may notice severe weight loss, anemia, vomiting, lethargy, and death.

What are the risks?

Severe renal dysplasia is generally life threatening. If both kidneys are involved, then the patient will usually die within one year of age. If only one kidney is involved, the patient may live a fairly normal life. Because it is an inherited condition, these individuals should not be bred.

What is the management?

There is no long-term treatment for renal dysplasia. The symptoms are progressive in all but the mildest cases (those with only one kidney involved). Intravenous fluids and other kidney support treatments will be temporarily beneficial. Restricted, but high quality protein diets are recommended in affected patients.