

Idiopathic Vestibular Disease in Cats

Overview

If you spin around in circles as fast as you can and then attempt to walk in a straight line, you'll experience what your cat probably feels like if he's suffering with vestibular disease. There are two types of vestibular disease: peripheral and central. In this article, we will discuss the peripheral form, which, with treatment, generally carries a good prognosis and is much more common than central vestibular disease, which attacks the central nervous system and brain.

In cats, this disease is **idiopathic**, meaning its cause is not known. It usually happens without warning or as result of a concurrent condition, and can affect cats of any age.

Symptoms

The most common symptom of vestibular disease in cats is dizziness. No, your four-legged friend hasn't been hitting the bottle...but it may look like she has!

Other symptoms could include

- Significant head tilt
- Falling
- Repetitive eye movement (nystagmus)
- Loud meowing
- Incoordination (ataxia)

Diagnosis/Treatment

Once consulted, your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam, looking carefully at your pet's ears, and may recommend diagnostic tests to look for concurrent conditions and to rule out other disorders that mimic vestibular disease.

These tests could include:

- Measurement of blood glucose levels (sugar levels in the blood)
- Chemistry tests to evaluate kidney, liver, and pancreatic function, as well as sugar levels
- A complete blood count (CBC) to rule out blood-related conditions
- Electrolyte tests to ensure your pet isn't dehydrated or suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- Urine tests to screen for urinary tract infection and other disease, and to evaluate the ability of

the kidneys to concentrate urine

- A thyroid test to determine if the thyroid gland is producing too much thyroid hormone
- Ultrasound examination of the abdomen to rule out tumors

Treatment will depend on the discovery of any concurrent conditions or underlying causes. If there is no identified cause, your veterinarian will suggest supportive care that you can provide your dizzy kitty while he recovers. The good news: most cases resolve quickly, with cats recovering from this disease without medication.

Prevention

There is no known prevention for idiopathic vestibular disease. Routine health care and physicals including diagnostic tests can identify—sooner rather than later—any underlying conditions that could possibly cause vestibular disease. Call your veterinarian immediately if your cat seems dizzy or “drunk”—vestibular disease can happen quickly and can be scary, for both you and your pet!

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian - they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.