



## Interesting Case from our web site [www.fairfield-vets.co.uk](http://www.fairfield-vets.co.uk)



### "Suki" - Miniature Schnauzer with Primary Lipoproteinaemia



Suki, an 8 year old Miniature Schnauzer, had a history of bouts of gastroenteritis. She had been presented to us on several occasions with vomiting and diarrhoea. On a recent occasion, it was suspected that she had an inflamed pancreas (pancreatitis), as she had a painful abdomen in addition to her usual symptoms.

If an animal presents with stomach upsets, we tend to assume that they may have eaten something they shouldn't have, or possibly have an infection, or it may even have been sparked off by stress (a lot of dogs get diarrhoea after bonfire night!).

If the problem keeps recurring, as in Suki's case, we have to start to consider whether there could be an underlying disease. Thus Suki came in for some blood tests. The routine tests that we ran in our own laboratory were unremarkable. However, when I looked at Suki's plasma (the fluid part of the blood that remains when the blood cells have been separated off), I noticed that it was lipaemic - that is, it was milky white instead of clear. This means that there is a lot of fat (lipid) in the sample. When a patient has been starved for 12 hours, prior to the sample being taken (as Suki had), there should be no trace of lipaemia. This set my brain ticking, and I recalled that there is an unusual condition that specifically affects the Miniature Schnauzer breed, which can cause excess lipid levels in the blood. I have never previously diagnosed this condition, but I recalled that it had been mentioned on some of the specialist internal medicine courses which I frequently attend.

I sent Suki's blood samples off to an external laboratory to have the levels of two particular lipids checked. These lipids - cholesterol and triglyceride, were both elevated. The triglyceride level was 25 times normal! The next step in the investigation was to see if Suki had any other disease which could elevate her lipid levels. For example, diabetes, underactive thyroid glands and another hormonal disease called Cushings disease can all give raised blood lipids. The tests proved negative for all these other conditions, so we were able to say that Suki's high lipid levels were due to this particular breed-associated condition - Primary Lipoproteinaemia of the Miniature Schnauzer.

This condition is one that we call "idiopathic" - this basically means that nobody actually knows why it happens!

Looking back over Suki's history, this problem has probably been responsible for most of her health problems over the past couple of years. Vomiting, diarrhoea and pancreatitis are all sparked off by the high lipid levels. More serious symptoms such as seizures can also occur. The good news for Suki is that the condition should be manageable by feeding her a low fat diet. We will have to monitor her blood lipid levels, and if they do not drop with dietary treatment, we can give her tablet medication ("statins"), commonly used in humans to reduce cholesterol levels in patients who have had heart attacks etc. No roast dinner for you this Christmas, Suki!

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