

Steroid Responsive Meningitis-Arteritis (SRMA)

SRMA is an auto-immune disease that causes inflammation in the layers around the spinal cord called the meninges (meningitis) and small blood vessels (arteritis).

What is SRMA?

SRMA is an auto-immune disease that causes inflammation in the layers around the spinal cord called the meninges (meningitis) and small blood vessels (arteritis). It is most common in young large breed dogs and occurs most frequently in Beagles, Boxers, and Bernese Mountain dogs.

What are the symptoms of SRMA?

The inflammation leads to pain. The most common presentation for SRMA is neck pain but dogs can have pain elsewhere down the spine. Most dogs will be reluctant to turn or bend their necks, and some cry out. Some dogs will have concurrent joint pain. Many dogs also have a fever and decreased appetite.

How is SRMA diagnosed?

SRMA is diagnosed by collecting spinal fluid and looking for high numbers of a certain inflammatory cell called a neutrophil. An MRI is also recommended to look for other diseases that can cause neck pain.

How is SRMA treated?

SRMA is treated by giving medications to suppress the immune system including steroids and in some cases additional immunosuppressive medications. The steroid dose is gradually tapered in dogs that are pain-free and have no neutrophils in the spinal fluid. Treatment is typically continued for several months.

What is the prognosis for SRMA?

The prognosis is good. Most dogs will respond to treatment quickly. In some cases, clinical signs can recur months to years after a dog has recovered, and additional treatment is required.

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