



INTERNAL MEDICINE:
Feline Inherited Disorders

Overview

Documentation of heritable diseases of dogs is plentiful. In cases where a direct link between disease and breed has not been definitively shown, presumptive breed predispositions for particular disorders are well established. The wealth of information available about canine inherited diseases is due to the popularity of purebred dogs, and the ever-growing list of new “designer” dog breeds.

In comparison, most cats seen by veterinarians are of mixed lineage. However, the number of purebred cats appears to be increasing, as well as the appearance of newly created breeds produced by people looking to accentuate and perpetuate a particular physical or behavioral characteristic.

Education

Such creativity on the part of cat as well as dog breeders has led to a lengthening list of suspected heritable disorders. The most popular and well-established breeds have the longest list of disorders due to the greater number of affected animals and the opportunity to study their abnormalities. In contrast, the newer or less popular breeds have fewer established disorders, because it requires time to recognize disorders and identify a breed predilection.

It behooves veterinarians to become familiar with breed dispositions in both cats and dogs. Doing so will help in establishing differential diagnoses and advising breeders or clients looking to purchase a purebred cat or dog. The clinician should also be aware of the increasing availability of clinical and molecular tests for heritable disease.

Resources

To date, documentation of feline inherited disease has been sparse. The creation of a new website by the Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB), a non-profit organization based in the UK that serves the veterinary community as well as the public, has helped to fill the information void. The new website documents many known and suspected inherited disorders in cats, and also provides information and website links about available screening tests and references. Because the resource is electronic, the information will be continually updated, and will serve as a rich resource for those looking for information about feline inherited diseases. The new website is located at:

http://www.fabcats.org/breeders/inherited_disorders/index.php

Example of what is found on the website

Polycystic kidney disease:
Seen in Persian and Exotic cats around the world, polycystic kidney disease is inherited via an autosomal dominant mechanism. Clinical signs associated with azotemia and ultimately renal failure, may develop by 2-3 years of age, or may not appear until the cat is older. A few cats also develop hepatic cysts. Because the lesions and associated clinical signs sometimes do not develop until after a cat has produced offspring, clinical tests such as ultrasound will not prevent the disease from being transmitted to new generations of cats. Fortunately, there is now a gene test available in the US and UK that will permit identification of affected cats before they are bred.

Scottish Fold:
All Scottish Fold cats suffer from osteochondrodysplasia, resulting in degenerative joint disease. Clinical signs such as lameness, thick inflexible tails, and swelling of the hock regions are common, and are secondary to fusing of the joints. The mutation is inherited via an autosomal dominant mechanism, and cats with only one Fold parent are less affected than those born to two Fold parents. Even though the first Scottish Fold originated in Scotland, the breed is not recognized by the UK or the international cat fancy. Unfortunately, the breed is recognized by all of the breed registries in the US, serving to perpetuate the suffering endured by these cats.

Internal Medicine

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MVS offers full-time internal medicine service at BOTH HOSPITALS and our internists serve as an extension of your practice. Internal medicine service is offered at Auburn Hills Tues.-Fri. and in Southfield Mon.-Fri. Our clinicians have years of specialized training and experience. Please let us know how we can help you and your clients.

Questions?

Our internists are available for questions and consultations on medical conditions. They are also on-call for in-house consultation on medicine cases seen through the emergency service. Our internists review critical medical cases.

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