



PATIENT PRESENTING CLINICAL SIGNS

Ace Shill
Elevated liver enzymes, vomiting, icteric serum.
Abnormal PE/Chem/CBC/UA Results: ALP 617, TBili. 3.7, GGT 18, BUN 51, Alb 2.3, Glob 3.8.

SPECIES ULTRASONOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION OF THE ABDOMEN

Canine

Urinary System

BREED

Pomeranian

The **urinary bladder**, trigone, and pelvic urethra presented normal thicknesses and normal tone. The ureters were not visible which is normal. No uroliths or sediment were visualized and anechoic urine was present. No evidence of inflammatory or neoplastic changes were noted. Ureteral papillae were normal. The pelvic urethra was imaged 2.0 cm beyond the cystourethral junction. The residual prostate measured 6.0 mm.

SEX

Neutered Male

The **kidneys** revealed largely normal size and structure, corticomedullary definition and ratio (cortex 1/3 of medulla) were essentially maintained with some age-related loss of curvilinear patterns regarding the capsule and C/M junction. The cortices presented largely uniform texture with some increased echogenicity expected for his age patient. Medullary structure differed distinctly from that of the cortex and no evidence of pelvic dilation was present. Mineralization noted in both kidneys, non-obstructive. The right kidney measured 4.14 cm. The left kidney measured 4.26 cm.

AGE

12 Years

Adrenal Glands

WEIGHT

18 Pounds

Both **adrenal glands** were visualized and recognized as having normal shape, size, position and echogenicity for this breed. The phrenic vasculature, glandular echogenicity and detail were unremarkable. Capsule, cortex, and medullary definition were normal for this age patient. The left adrenal gland measured 1.68 cm x 0.47 cm at the cranial pole and 0.47 cm at the caudal pole. The right adrenal gland measured 1.52 cm x 0.82 cm at the cranial pole and 0.47 cm at the caudal pole.

INTERPRETED BY

Eric Lindquist, DMV
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Spleen

The **spleen** presented a mixed hypoechoic nodule measuring 0.97 cm x 0.64 cm in the mid caudal body.

IMAGING PERFORMED BY

Shari Reffi, CVT

Liver

The **liver** presented generalized enlargement with minor heterogeneous changes. The gallbladder was overdistended with striating bile, edematous wall, and enhanced surrounding mesentery. The common bile duct appeared slightly dilated with a minor amount of debris at 5.0 mm.

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Gastrointestinal

Examination of the **gastrointestinal tract** revealed a stomach and intestine free of stasis, of normal wall thickness, acceptable curvilinear mural detail, and peristaltic activity. Small and large intestine demonstrated normal luminal chyme and stool consistency respectively. No obstructive or overt infiltrative disease was noted. No associated abnormal lymphatic activity was noted.

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Pancreas

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The base and limbs of the **pancreas** were observed to be largely isoechoic to surrounding omental fat. Some parenchymal remodeling, however, with mild deviation from curvilinear normalcy was observed. Pancreatic duct and capsular irregularities were present consistent with age related changes. If pain upon imaging (+ Murphy sign) was present or if the patient is focally painful in subxyphoid palpation then low-grade smoldering chronic pancreatitis should be suspected.

DATE

10/25/21



PATIENT

Ace Shill

ULTRASONOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

- Mildly inflamed gallbladder mucocele and subjectively benign hepatopathy
- Splenic nodule
- Age related renal changes with minor mineralization

SPECIES

Canine

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS & FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend cholecystectomy in this patient with common bile duct lavage and liver biopsy. Splenic biopsy or removal could be considered. This is a surgical urgency. No evidence of any significant primary disease other than the possibility of minor concurrent inflammation, yet the pancreas is not the primary issue in this patient.

BREED

Pomeranian

SEX

Neutered Male

AGE

12 Years

WEIGHT

18 Pounds

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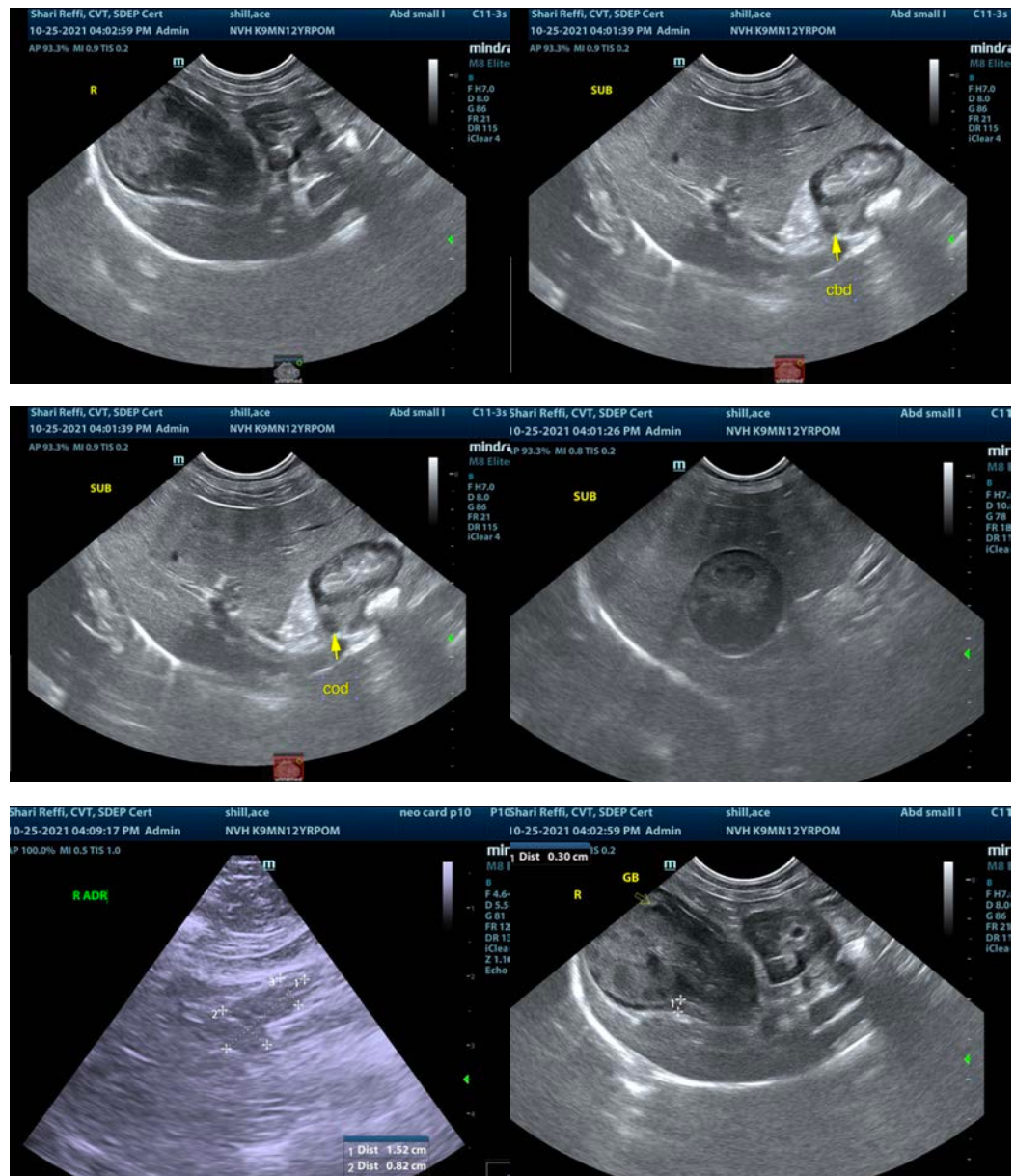
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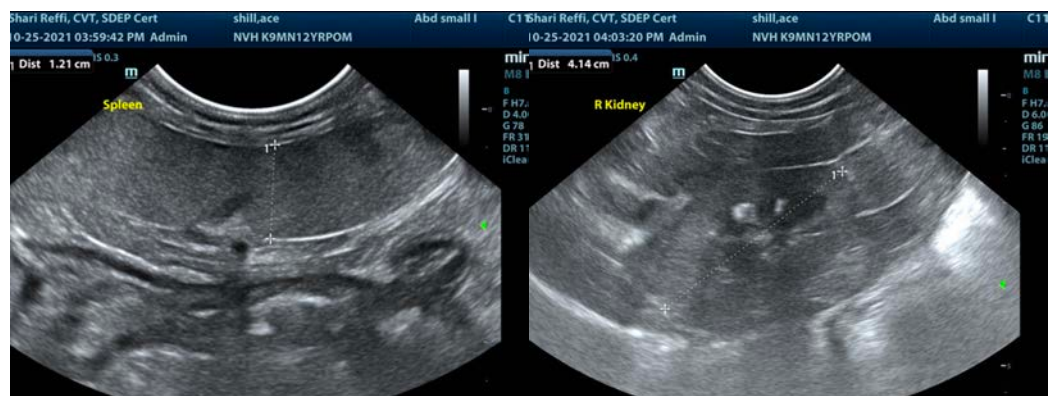
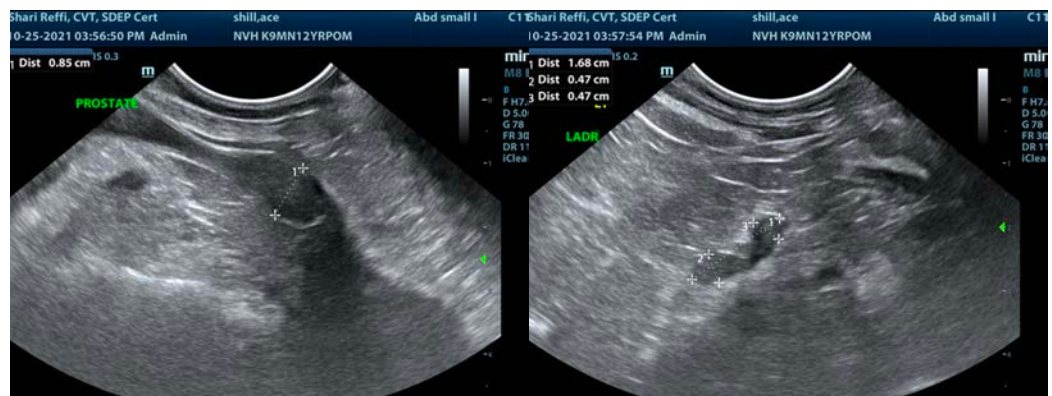
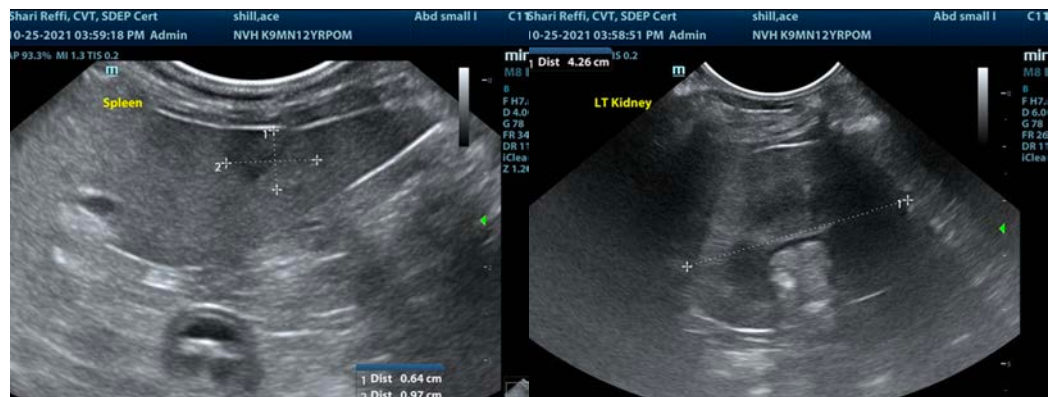
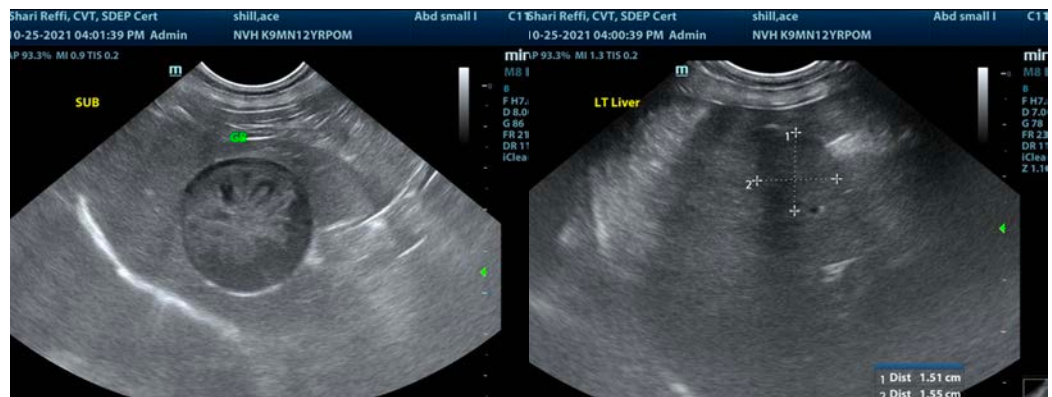
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The information and recommendations provided are based on the images presented by the referring veterinarian. No evaluation can be communicated regarding pathology that was not visible in the image/video clips provided.

SPECIES

Canine

Thank you for this referral. If the clinical or image interpretation does not parallel your findings or if I can be of any further assistance please contact me.

BREED

Pomeranian

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SEX

Neutered Male



The following is an applicable excerpt from the *Curbside Guide to Diagnosis & Treatment of Sonographic Disease* offered by SonoPath.com Lindquist, Frank, Lobetti, and Modler.

An essential quick guide for every general practitioner and sonographer.

<https://sonopath.com/products/curbside-guide-editing-due-release-12012015>

AGE

12 Years

Gallbladder Mucoceles

WEIGHT

18 Pounds

<http://www.sonopath.com/GBMucocele>

<http://www.sonopath.com/GBMucoceleSurvey>

<http://www.sonopath.com/SxBiliaryDisease>

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Subxiphoidal short axis of the liver in a dog with a gallbladder mucocele. The gallbladder is severely distended. Note the irregular hyperplasia of the hypoechoic mucosa and the stellate pattern of the echogenic inspissated bile within the center of the gallbladder. Also note the hyperechoic mesentery at the gallbladder neck compatible with bile peritonitis (arrow). This is an example of a typical "kiwi fruit" type mucocele.

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Description: A gallbladder mucocele occurs when the gallbladder becomes overly distended with an excessive accumulation of mucus secondary to cystic mucosal hyperplasia. Previously, pathologists noted this finding at necropsy and considered it an incidental or age-related lesion. In the last decade, however, it has become evident that not all gallbladder mucoceles remain clinically silent and that they can in fact be associated with extrahepatic bile duct obstruction (EHBDO), cholecystitis, and gallbladder wall rupture. Approximately 50% of mucoceles may result in necrosis and rupture, typically at the neck or



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fundic region of the gallbladder. The etiology of these mucoceles remains unknown, but researchers suspect that it is related to disordered cholestasis and/or lipid metabolism. Suggested causes include: primary or secondary gallbladder motility disorder; dyslipidemia/hypercholesterolemia; extrahepatic bile duct obstruction; and primary or secondary disorders of mucus-producing cells, such as cystic mucosal hyperplasia of the gallbladder wall. Clinical correlation is also seen with cholangitis, cholecystitis, cholelithiasis, biliary obstruction from cholelithiasis or neoplasia, and pancreatitis. Abnormal adrenal hormones may also play a causal role in altering gallbladder mucus secretion. Hypothyroid dogs are three times more likely to develop a mucocele, and Cushingoid dogs are twenty-nine times more likely to do so. Vacuolar hepatopathy frequently co-occurs with mucoceles; practitioners are therefore advised to investigate underlying disorders associated with vacuolar hepatopathy. Bacterial infection of the gallbladder has been associated with increased mucin production in dogs; this condition may also become pathological and lead to excessive mucus accumulation. In humans, hypercortisolism is related to chronic cholecystitis and changes the biochemical composition of bile. The latter, however, was not substantiated by two studies evaluating bile composition, bacterial infection, and sludge formation during a three-month period of exogenous administration of hydrocortisone administration in dogs. There is a marked increase in the prevalence of mucocele formation in dogs with naturally occurring hyperadrenocorticism, but a definitive correlational mechanism has yet not been ascertained.

Mucocele are most commonly seen in middle-aged to older dogs (median age of 10 years); however, researchers have reported mucocele development in dogs as young as 3 years old. Certain breeds—Miniature Schnauzers, Shetland Sheepdogs, Cocker Spaniels, Shih-tzus, Pugs, Bichon Frisés, Schipperkes, West Highland White Terriers, and Scottish Terriers—appear to be overrepresented among canine patients. Significant predisposition to mucocele formation in Shelties prompted an investigation that uncovered a specific genetic mutation in the ABCB4 gene, which functions in the translocation of phosphatidylcholine across hepatocyte cell membranes. In the future, we may be able to screen young Shelties for this mutation, which would allow us to monitor gallbladder mucocele development with ultrasound over time and thereby offer early dietary and medical management, or even surgical intervention as needed. Felines are less commonly affected.

Clinical Signs: According to several retrospective studies, the most common clinical signs include vomiting (87%), abdominal pain (87%), anorexia (78%), lethargy, icterus (57%), and fever (26%). The average duration of illness is 5 days. Focal pain upon examining the gallbladder is common and referred to as a positive Murphy sign. Patients may also be asymptomatic, despite biochemical abnormalities, even in the face of ultrasonographic evidence of a mucocele. Patients with fully formed mucoceles are at risk of further complications, such as gallbladder rupture, peritonitis, sepsis, and related coagulopathies, and should be considered for surgical intervention.

Diagnostics: Biochemical analyses may indicate leukocytosis, with or without a left shift, and most commonly reveal elevated hepatic enzymes (SAP 100%, GGT 86%, ALT 77%, AST 60%) and bilirubin (63%). Ultrasonographic findings may include: a distended gallbladder with centrally suspended luminal content and a hypochoic intraluminal rim; a thickened gallbladder wall; intraluminal stellate; echogenic striations (the “kiwi fruit sign”); and/or the presence of non-dependent intraluminal contents or sludge. (Note: The presence of the “kiwi fruit sign” is not essential for the diagnosis of a gall bladder mucocele, as many mucocele variations do not demonstrate a complete stellate pattern.) A hypochoic ring seen around the gallbladder may indicate wall edema or early rupture. Presence of free fluid, as well as localized, echogenic hepatic parenchyma and intra-abdominal fat, are also consistent with bile leakage and peritonitis. Pain is often noted upon interrogation of the area. Dilation of the common bile duct may also be present.

Since there exists an association between hypercholesterolemia/hyperlipidemia and gallbladder mucoceles, patients that exhibit both should be screened for hypothyroidism, adrenal hyperplasia syndromes (Cushing’s disease and sex hormone dysregulation), diabetes mellitus, pancreatitis, exogenous exposure to glucocorticoids, and necroinflammatory liver disease.



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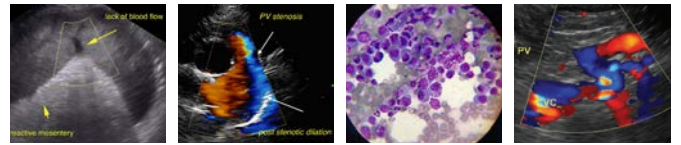
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Treatment: Surgical intervention is recommended due to the significant risk of peritonitis and sepsis associated with rupture, and since medical management on its own may not be effective. Candidates for surgery must be adequately stabilized prior to surgery, and a coagulation panel should be assessed beforehand. Use of ursodeoxycholic acid (Actigall) is not recommended if any sonographic aspects of wall inflammation or emergent perforation are present. Percutaneous centesis of the gallbladder is also not advised in the presence of a mucocele. Some studies that have investigated a relatively small number of dogs have found medical therapy with Actigall and SAME to be somewhat effective at a very early subclinical stage. Yet, there are no definitive guidelines for ascertaining whether certain sonographic or laboratory findings permit the differentiation of a clinically significant mucocele versus a non-clinical, stable mucocele that may become clinically significant in the future. For this reason, each patient must be assessed individually. It may be the case that very dramatic mucoceles do not cause any overt clinical signs, whereas other patients may have minor mucoceles that lead to significant clinical signs and necessitate urgent cholecystectomy to avoid the onset of bile peritonitis due to rupture. It is generally advised that dogs with clinical signs, elevated liver enzymes, elevated WBC counts, and sonographic evidence of a mucocele be treated surgically. However, if a clinically silent mucocele is found incidentally on ultrasound, careful observation and monitoring is reasonable, provided there are no underlying diseases that may promote degradation (e.g., hyperadrenocorticism). Owners should be instructed to carefully monitor their pets for the development of clinical signs that may signal progression of the disease.

Antibiotic therapy directed towards gram-negative, enteric bacteria (i.e., *E. coli*, *Klebsiella*, *Enterobacter*, etc.) and anaerobic bacteria is indicated, and will likely be necessary for several weeks following surgery. Culture and sensitivity results should guide long-term treatment. Cholecystectomy with a possible bile duct transposition is the procedure of choice. The bile duct is often flushed to remove sludge and debris to help avoid post-surgical obstruction. Cholecystotomy for removing gallbladder contents is not advised as studies have shown that mucocele concretions have reformed in several dogs treated in this manner. At the time of surgery, one should obtain liver biopsies as well as submit cultures and sensitivity of the gallbladder contents. Liver biopsies may show normal tissue, cholangiohepatitis, biliary hyperplasia, vacuolar hepatopathy, or mild to moderate portal hepatitis/fibrosis with bile duct proliferation. Ultrasound-guided cholecystocentesis is not recommended in dogs with mature mucoceles due to the risk of gallbladder rupture and seeding the abdomen with bacteria. Rupture of the gallbladder constitutes a surgical emergency and carries a worse prognosis for survival. Several investigators have noted that, upon surgical exploration of asymptomatic mucocele patients, there is evidence of prior localized peritonitis and fibrosis, likely resulting from tears in the gallbladder's neck, which lead to minute amounts of bile leakage.

Conclusion: Possible etiological explanations for gallbladder mucoceles are quite varied, and underlying diseases must be treated. The treatment of choice is cholecystectomy, with surgical intervention especially recommended for patients with clinical signs or significantly elevated liver enzymes so as to avoid gallbladder rupture and subsequent peritonitis.



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SPECIES

Canine

BREED

Pomeranian

SEX

Neutered Male

AGE

12 Years

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18 Pounds

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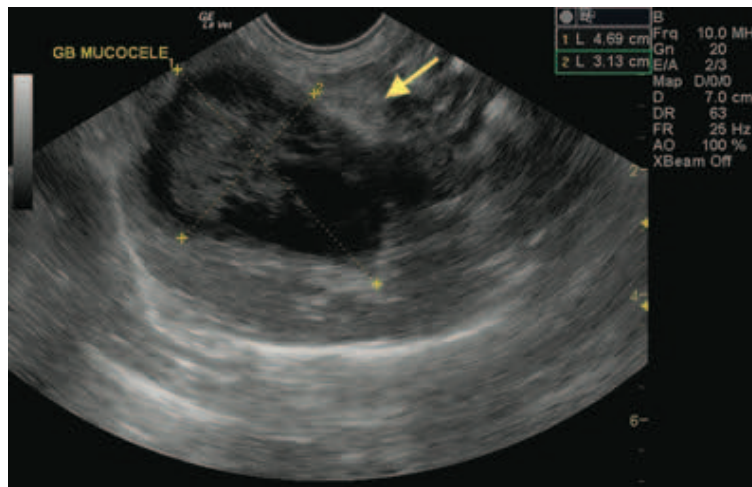
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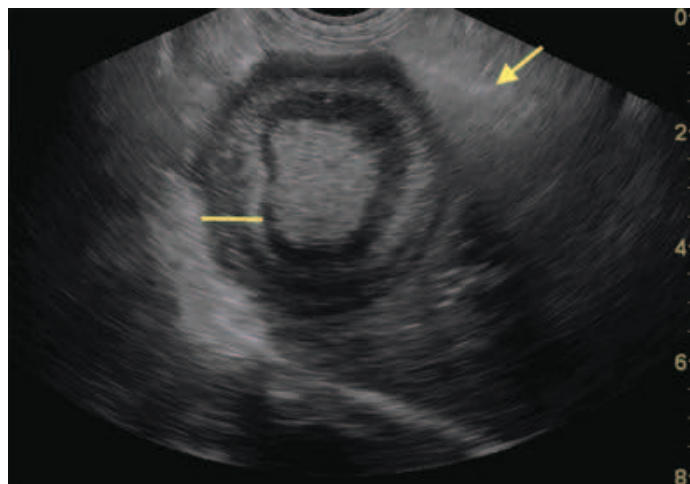
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Subxiphoidal long axis of the liver in a dog with a gallbladder mucocele. The gallbladder is severely distended with abnormal high tone and dilated cystic duct. Irregular mucosal hyperplasia is seen. The echogenic inspissated bile accumulates in the center. The adjacent mesentery is hyperechoic indicating perivesicular inflammation (arrow). It is very important to note that the absence of a stellate or “kiwi fruit” pattern does not rule out a mucocele and inflammatory pattern associated with the Gb wall indicates a surgical emergency.



Subxiphoidal short axis of the liver in a dog with an inflamed gallbladder mucocele. Note the layered and echogenic appearance of the hyperplastic mucosa and excessive wall thickness (line). Echogenic bile is concentrated in the center. Regional increase in mesenteric echogenicity indicates loss of wall integrity and peritonitis (arrow). The patient had a + Murphy sign (pain upon imaging) typical of inflamed mucocele.



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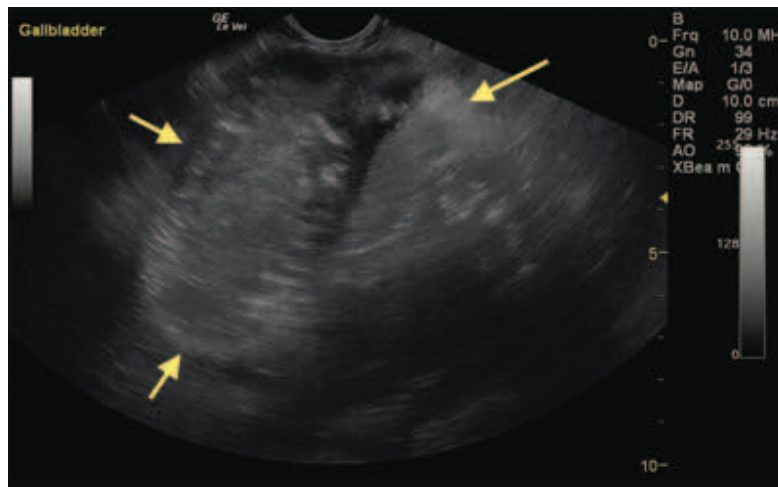
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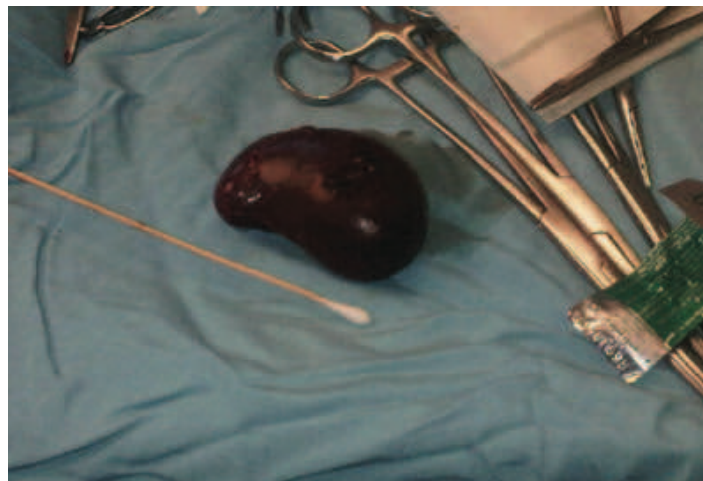
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Long axis of the liver in a diabetic dog with a gallbladder mucocele. Note the sac-like expansion of the enlarged gallbladder (small arrows). Also note the presence of echogenic gas within the severely inflamed and hyperplastic mucosa and gallbladder lumen. Focal peritonitis is seen in the region of the dilated cystic duct (long arrow).



Post cholecystectomy view of a Gb mucocele. Surgery is always the best option for mature mucocele that is firm on palpation surgically and non expressible. A gall bladder motility study can be performed to assess functionality and further support surgical removal. Pericyclic inflammatory pattern or + Murphy sign on sonogram indicates a surgical emergency.

References:

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PATIENT

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SPECIES

Canine

Kook PH, Schellenberg S, Grest P, et al. Microbiologic evaluation of gallbladder bile of healthy dogs and dogs with iatrogenic hypercortisolism: a pilot study. *J Vet Intern Med* 2010;24(1):224-28.

BREED

Pomeranian

Kook PH, Schellenberg S, Rentsch KM, et al. Effects of iatrogenic hypercortisolism on gallbladder sludge formation and biochemical bile constituents in dogs. *Vet J* 2012;191(2):225-30.

SEX

Neutered Male

Malek S, Sinclair E, Hosgood G, et al. Clinical findings and prognostic factors for dogs undergoing cholecystectomy for gallbladder mucocele. *Vet Surg* 2013;42(4):418-26.

AGE

12 Years

Mealey KL, Minch JD, White SN, et al. An insertion mutation in ABCB4 is associated with gallbladder mucocele formation in dogs. *Comp Hepatol* 2010;9:6.

WEIGHT

18 Pounds

Mehler SJ, Bennett RA. Canine Extrahepatic Biliary Tract Disease and Surgery. *Compend Contin Educ Vet* 2006;28(4):302-15.

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Walter R, Dunn ME, d'Anjou MA, L'Écuyer M. Nonsurgical resolution of gallbladder mucocele in two dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2008;232(11):1688-93.

HOSPITAL NAME

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