Salmonella Infection
ADVICE FOR OWNERS
Salmonella Infection (Salmonellosis)

- Salmonella is a bacteria which is an uncommon cause of infectious diarrhoea in dogs and cats.
- There are a number of different species of Salmonella - but almost all can cause illness.
- Diarrhoea is the most common sign of infection and can be haemorrhagic (bloody), watery, can cause serious illness and even be fatal.
- Salmonella was found in over 80% of samples of raw chicken and this is a common way for dogs and cats to become infected.
- 30% of dogs fed on a raw meat diet had Salmonella present in their faeces. 80% of raw food diets may contain Salmonella.
- Salmonella can also infect and cause illness in humans (it is a ZOONOSIS) - an infected animal poses a risk for human health.

What is Salmonella?
Salmonella is a bacteria which can infect many different animals and humans.

How does my dog or cat become infected?
Pets usually ingest the bacteria in food or from infected water.

Which dogs are at risk?
All dogs and cats are at risk, but those which eat a raw meat diet are at greater risk as even meat which is safe for human consumption may be contaminated with Salmonella.

What are the signs of Salmonella infection?
The bacteria can invade cells lining the intestine minutes after ingestion. Despite this, most infected dogs or cats will not show signs of their infection. Possible signs are:
- Severe diarrhoea (often bloody)
- Lethargy
- Fever
- Not eating
- Vomiting

Vomiting and diarrhoea can cause rapid dehydration and can be fatal.

If your dog shows any of these signs contact your vet immediately.

How is Salmonella diagnosed?
Salmonella is found in the stools of many dogs and cats without diarrhoea - so growing Salmonella on a faecal culture does not confirm that it is causing a problem. If we find Salmonella on a faecal culture and your pet has signs that fit with an infection (fever, watery or bloody diarrhoea, vomiting etc.) - we will suspect that Salmonella is the cause.

How is Salmonella treated?
Salmonellosis (infection with Salmonella) is potentially fatal so prompt treatment is important. Supportive therapy which may involve fluids into the vein, anti-sickness medication or antacids. If your pet is very unwell or has severe diarrhoea antibiotics will be used to treat the infection; the choice of particular antibiotic will depend on the results of testing performed at our laboratory. Treatments may be continued after your pet returns home from the hospital.

Risk to Human Health
Salmonella is a zoonotic disease; a zoonotic disease is any infectious disease that can be transmitted (in some instances, by a vector) from non-human animals, both wild and domestic, to humans. Around 3% of human Salmonella infections are caused by an infected pet. Salmonella in humans generally causes fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. Normally this is treatable but infection can be very serious, especially in those with poor immune system (the young, old or unwell). Infected dogs can continue to shed bacteria for up to 100 days; a sample will be taken from your pet after treatment to verify that the infection has resolved and there is no longer a risk to your health.

It is important to take precautions to reduce the risk to human health if your pet is infected. This is why we may hospitalise your pet in an isolation facility until the diarrhoea has improved. If you find that your dog or cat has Salmonella, you should disinfect all bedding, toys, bowls and utensils. Bedding should be washed at the hottest possible cycle. When your pet returns home - you should wash your hands with an antibacterial soap after handling them or any of the items mentioned previously. Also ensure that any children in the household are also adhering to these strict hygiene precautions. Please ask your vet for more advice.

If you feel unwell or are concerned please seek medical advice immediately.

Questions for my veterinarian: