

Ectopic Ureters

What is a ureter?

A ureter is the tube that connects the kidney to the bladder. It should not be confused with the urethra, which is the tube that leaves the bladder to the outside.

What is an ectopic ureter, and what are the symptoms?

If a ureter is ectopic, it means that although it begins in the kidney, it does not empty into the bladder in a normal position. The ureter can implant into the urethra, the uterus or vagina, or into the rectum. Symptoms include constant dribbling of urine, pooling of urine when the dog stands up or lies down, or chronic diarrhoea. Young, large breed, female dogs are more likely to have ectopic ureters, although male dogs can get this condition too.

Investigation and surgery

A member of our internal medicine or surgical team will discuss your pet's history and symptoms to decide a tailor-made diagnostic plan. This will include a full physical examination, and may include urine tests and blood tests. Many animals with ectopic ureters also have urinary tract infection, which should be treated prior to surgical correction. To investigate where the ureters are positioned, the vet will recommend an ultrasound scan or a CT-scan of the abdomen. The position of the abnormally placed ureter will determine which surgery should be performed. In some cases, the condition can be corrected by using a camera and a laser directly within the bladder to create new openings. In some cases, however, open abdominal surgery is needed to manually replace the ureter into a functional place.

Why have I been referred?

Diagnosis of ectopic ureters often requires specialist equipment and thorough knowledge of the local anatomy. Surgical management of ectopic ureters often requires additional surgical training, in addition to specialist equipment.

Prognosis

The position of the abnormal ureter will determine the surgical procedure that is performed, and ultimately the overall prognosis. In many cases however, dogs return to normal function and are completely continent.