Domperidone treatment for agalactia in a queen
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A 2-year old female Himalayan cat with a history of neonatal loss in her previous three litters presented to Auburn after queening three kittens. Physical examination revealed poor mammary development and agalactia. The kittens were supplemented with milk replacer, but all died within two days. Two kittens were submitted for necropsy, and the cause of death was undetermined. Other causes for fading kitten syndrome were ruled out, including blood type incompatibility and obvious infection.

The queen was presented six months later for suspected pregnancy. Pregnancy was confirmed and gestational age estimated with consecutive ultrasound examinations. Domperidone therapy was initiated six days before queening and continued one week following. The day of queening, the kittens were administered serum from a healthy adult donor cat of known blood type as a colostrum replacement. Therapy was successful; three of five kittens thrived and agalactia was resolved.

Primary agalactia occurs with defects of the pituitary-ovarian-mammary gland axis. Secondary agalactia occurs as failure of ejection, occurring secondary to stress, premature parturition, mastitis, or metritis. Iatrogenic agalactia may follow progesterone supplementation. Oxytocin and metoclopramide are often used for treatment at time of delivery in affected animals.

There is little literature on diagnosis and treatment of agalactia in queens. Domperidone is a dopamine inhibitor used for treatment of fescue toxicosis in pregnant mares and agalactia in bitches. However, the use of domperidone in queens for agalactia is not well described.

Primary agalactia in queens is rare, but this case shows potential for improving outcome in affected queens. The timing of initiating domperidone is essential. If too early, milk production may increase too soon before queening, thus lack of active nursing would cause milk to be resorbed. If treatment is too late, the drug would not have adequate time to be effective before kittens attempt to nurse.

References