

Strep G Infections - by Marva Marrow

Written by Lorraine Shelton

Tuesday, 06 January 2009 18:56 - LAST REVISED Friday, 04 October 2013

G Strep (Group G Streptococcus bacteria): A Scary Story With a Happy Ending By Marva Marrow 7th Heaven Orientals

The beginning was very promising and I was excited. Sisa's litter was a repeat breeding of a very successful previous litter. She had a huge belly, was healthy, eating well -- all the signs of a normal pregnancy. Sisa went into labor and first gave birth to two stillborn kittens. I was sad, but not surprised as following that, she had eight healthy, good sized Oriental kittens. She was and always had been an excellent mother and got right to work cleaning babies, nipping cords, curling around them protectively and urging them to nurse. All was well.. That is, all was well until the kittens were ten days old.

That morning, I picked up the first baby, to check them as I usually did, first thing when I woke up. The baby's little nostrils were clogged shut with mucous! I had never seen signs of URIs (upper respiratory infection) in such young babies, so, alarmed, I quickly picked up the next kitten. All the babies had clogged nostrils and it seemed to me that their breathing was labored. Panicked, I got my veterinarian quickly on the phone. We immediately initialized a program of Amoxy and I started supplementing the kittens, giving just a little bit of formula every couple of hours, so as not to stress their systems too much, cleaning off little noses with warm water and cotton.

By that evening at least one of the kittens was dead and a couple of others were dying. Round the clock for two weeks I gave sub-Q fluids, small amounts of formula and often, wiped little noses to keep them open. We changed their antibiotic to Clavamox, then added in injectible Baytril when that alone did not seem to be getting results – anything we could think of. My veterinarian and I were stumped and disheartened. I was emotionally exhausted. And the babies kept dying, one by one, despite my efforts. It was truly heartbreaking to watch and not be able to save them. Sisa, poor thing, was very confused and couldn't understand what was going on with her babies.

I thought I had been hit with bordatella. I ordered the bordatella vaccine, found the most current information on treatment (no one else in my household showed any signs of illness), isolated Sisa and babies. No use, one by one I watched the babies die, struggling to breathe. And I couldn't help them. Then the healthy litter of four who were in my bedroom with a different mother, also isolated, started to die and I lost all four of these babies...What was going on?? In the meantime, I had had a couple of kittens from Sisa's litter posted with urgency and the request to see if it in fact had been bordatella. I also vaccinated everyone in the household with

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the bordatella vaccine and waited. The post mortem on the kittens was inconclusive, coming back "possible bordatella" and "cause of death, pneumonia." Even I could see that, sides heaving and gasping for breath, pneumonia is what ultimately caused the death of these babies. As everyone was vaccinated and a couple of months had gone by without incident (and also without breedings or babies), I thought that the problems would be over. No such luck.. They were actually just beginning and I had no idea about this..

Over the next ten months or so I ALMOST got used to the idea that I would have breedings that wouldn't take, litters of maximum one or two live kittens, litters with 4-5 stillborn kittens and only one that would survive, only to die at three weeks or so, too many pyometras, etc. etc. As all my girls (and boys) appeared totally healthy –no signs of URI, no digestion or other problems, my veterinarian and I were mystified. I wouldn't be surprised if he was finally starting to think that my breed, the Oriental, was inherently fragile –or at least that is what I myself was starting to wonder! Where all these happenings just coincidence? Here are some of the problems I experienced: A girl (one of my DMs) who had had four healthy litters of 5-6 had a litter with five kittens, four of them stillborn. Only one lived. A young girl I had been showing, with over 160 points to her grand, on the morning of a show, she presented herself to me with a pyometra. I rushed her to the veterinarian. She was treated successfully with Baytril and prostaglandins. I bred her on the next heat. The breeding took. She aborted her kittens at eight weeks. I bred her again. It took. She AGAIN aborted her kittens at eight weeks into the pregnancy. My other DM girl who had had two good litters was bred to my stud THREE times and the breeding did not take.

I had litters of one or two kittens where before I had had normal litters of 4-6. In two of these litters of one, the kitten was fine in the morning and suddenly dead in the evening –signs of a quick and intense pneumonia and nothing I could do. A girl who came for breeding (all tests and healthy) produced two kittens with spinal deformities that died at a few weeks of age. The sire had had many healthy litters with never any sort of deformity or problem. Needless to say, I couldn't understand what was going on as all blood panels and other diagnostic tests came back totally normal, there were no signs of ill health: coats were shiny, eyes were bright, appetites were excellent, energy levels were great. I was getting really discouraged and depressed.

Then, a breakthrough... A breeder friend in Australia forwarded me an e-mail from an Australian feline health list. The post was from Dr. Sue Rodger-Withers PhD, a microbiologist and university lecturer in that country. She and her colleagues had done research on low grade uterine infections due to Gp G-Strep (Group G Streptococcus bacteria) and the use of Antirobe (clindamycin) for treatment. Here is what she said: "Symptoms: queens and kittens (males usually asymptomatic – they don't have a uterus of course, but they can carry this bug) Some symptoms that might be caused by the Gp G-Strep: a.. Unexplained spontaneous abortions b..

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All the signs of Chlamydia but negative on testing c.. Kittens doing ok then suddenly die from acute severe broncho-pneumonia (they are ok and you take a look a few hours later and some may already be dead) d.. Birth abnormalities e.g. intestines on outside e.. No live kittens (I know of one lady who in two years only had one live kitten out of ninety-two. After Antirobe treatment - everything is fine). f.. Problems don't respond to the main stream antibiotics.

The manner in which this bacterium was found: after unexplained losses, a breeder who shall remain nameless, decided to treat a litter with severe bronchopneumonia (some about to die, others very ill) with Antirobe -- at this time it was not scheduled for use in cats. Outcome: Some kittens died but several very ill ones were ok within hours. Decision: Treat all problems in cattery with Antirobe Outcome: Problems gone. I wanted to try to find out the cause (obviously microbial). I obtained aborted fetuses (sterile - still in their "plastic bags"): passed onto friends at Attwood Vet research lab (I used to work there). Result: Strep G - drug resistant to almost everything except Clindamycin (Antirobe). The bug was detected after incubation in a 10% oxygen environment for 10 days (called a facultative anaerobe). Question: Will samples sent to the usual vet diagnostic labs detect this? Answer: No. Requires specialized equipment to grow this bug and vet labs are reluctant to incubate something for 10 days (costs too much money).

Since this time, many breeders with similar unexplained problems have treated catteries with Antirobe and everything is now ok. Antirobe is now available for feline use (usually for gingivitis or osteomyelitis -- involving facultative anaerobes). Many vets are still unaware of this bug....and say the problem is Chlamydia. Treatment plans: outlined in Truda Straedes book on breeding. Truda and myself have helped out many breeders (some wished to remain anonymous and that's ok) - and passed the information onto the vets associated with the breeders." Well, needless to say, receiving this information, which to me, described my situation exactly was like a bombshell! I immediately wrote to Dr. Rodger-Withers describing what I had experienced. As I compiled the letter to her, my list of "coincidental" fertility and reproductive problems grew longer and longer and I realized that in the past year, I really had not had ONE single, what I would call "normal" pregnancy and litter! Dr. Rogers-Withers was kind enough to reply to me almost immediately.

She said that what I was describing did indeed sound like Gp G-Strep. She described the treatment, which I was very eager to begin: All cats in the household, including spays/neuters, males, older kittens (especially those to be used in a breeding program) should be treated with Antirobe (clindamycin) 25mg per cat, twice daily for THREE WEEKS. This can also be given safely in pregnancy!! Now, Antirobe is one of the most foul tasting (bitter) medications on the planet. The idea of dosing ALL my cats (about 15, including spays/neuters, older kittens) with this twice daily for three weeks was pretty daunting!! I opted to get the 25 mg capsules instead. I got pretty good at popping those suckers down the "hatch," although I did catch the odd tooth on my fingers at time and had plenty of nicks from the process.

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However, get through it, we did. As I had one girl at four weeks pregnant at the time I started, for assurance, I also had my veterinarian make me up syringes of penicillin to give to the mother and babies at birth, as Dr. Susan Little advises on her website (G-Strep article, site address is <http://www.catvet.homestead.com> . The direct link to the specific article is <http://catvet.homestead.com/Strep.html> .).

Hopeful, I decided to breed several girls right after they had the treatment. All the breedings took! Bellies started to look rounded and promising! Even my girl who had had the two miscarriages at eight weeks started to look very pregnant and she felt nice and hard — I felt kittens moving. Happy ending...the Antirobe treatment worked, big time!! I now have large, healthy litters from all my girls – including Tierra, the girl that lost the two litters, gave birth to six healthy, vigorous babies last week! All kittens in all the litters are growing and doing fine and I have more kittens than I have EVER had at once. But as I work at home, I am just happy that I will be taking care of them and crazy for a couple of months with the sound of little paws running through the house.

One more thing...one little girl in the litter where the mother started treatment at four weeks into the pregnancy was not weaning. She was nine weeks old and her brother was twice her size. I was worried. A veterinary exam showed nothing at all wrong with her, but every kind of food I tempted her with or tried, failed. Then we decided to try the Antirobe with her, just on a hunch. After only two doses, she started eating!! The next day, it took very little coaxing to get her interested in the food and her outlook is now promising whereas before, I was starting to think I might lose her. If there are any “poor doer” kittens in the resulting litters of queens who have been treated with the Antirobe – no matter their age, consider treating those as well with the drug. Dosage instructions follow. I have used this for a week or more with no problems. Note: I have found since a good way to give the oral Antirobe, seems to cut the taste and make it more acceptable...draw up your amount into the oral syringe and then draw up a few tenths of a cc of liquid (pediatric) Vitamin C. The Vitamin C has its own benefits as well. This is an especially effective way to give the medication to young kittens.

I would HIGHLY recommend that anyone experiencing these fertility/reproductive problems try the Antirobe treatment. You really do need to treat ALL the cats in your household though and for the full three weeks. I gave my two older kittens (around 3-4 lbs at the time) half the dose, or 25 mg ONCE daily, but everyone else had the twice daily dose of 25mg. Note: Dr. Kristi Fisher recommends that to be effective the dosage be on the high end: 11 mg/kg twice daily. She says, “Depending on the concentration at the tissue site, Antirobe can be either bacteriostatic (meaning just keep the bacteria from increasing) or bacteriocidal (meaning killing off all of the bacteria). Signs of overdose are basic – vomiting or diarrhea.”

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As I am mathematically impaired, Dr. Fisher also offered this useful information on calculating dosage: "The best way to break down a dosage is to remember that 1kg (kilogram) = 2.2 lbs (I really like to be weighed in kgs!). So, weigh the cat in pounds and divide it by 2.2 to give you the kgs. Then multiply that by the dose you want. In this case, lets say a 1 pound cat.. $1 \text{ lb} / 2.2 \text{ kgs} = 0.45 \text{ kgs}$ we want 11 mgs/kg twice daily, so $11 \text{ mgs} \times 0.45 = 5 \text{ mgs}$ The Antirobe is 25mg/ml, so divide 5mg by 25mg/ml to get 0.2ml. That is your dose for a one pound cat." Thankfully, following the treatment should knock out the Gp G-Strep problem for good, so even though it is quite an ordeal, it is DEFINITELY worth it. Take it from one satisfied...and relieved...breeder...

For those of you who need more information, Dr. Sue Rogers-Withers has checked this article for accuracy and has permitted me to publish her e-mail address. She would be pleased to hear from you: qihai@optushome.com.au You may also e-mail me: mmarrow@earthlink.net.