

Quick Tips – From the ER

FAST Evaluation of Trauma Patients

If your practice is equipped with ultrasound, the Focused Abdominal Sonogram for Trauma is a rapid, sensitive, non-invasive, repeatable, cost-effective, and relatively easy method of detecting free abdominal fluid in trauma patients. As the physical exam alone identifies only 35% of intra-abdominal injuries in trauma patients, diagnostic testing is indicated. According to one study, hemoabdomen may occur in up to 45% of HBC dogs. The FAST exam is intended to rapidly assess for free fluid, not to assess internal organs; more extensive ultrasound examination may be recommended later, once the patient has stabilized. To perform a FAST exam: 1) unless contraindicated, place the patient in dorsal or left lateral recumbency; 2) after clipping the hair coat, begin scanning just caudal to the xiphoid process, fanning left, right, cranial, and caudal; 3) if no free fluid is noted between liver lobes or between the liver-diaphragm, relocate the probe to the “midline bladder position;” 4) scan similarly, looking for free fluid outside the bladder wall; 5) if no free fluid is noted move to the right and left flanks, scanning similarly and looking for free fluid among intestinal loops and/or in the retroperitoneal space. With practice, the FAST exam can be completed within five minutes and provide important initial information on your trauma patient.

We hope you found this information helpful,

The team of PESCM



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