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RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF PRESUMPTIVE CEREBRAL MICROBLEEDS AND CONCURRENT MRI FINDINGS IN 747 DOGS

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Current advances in veterinary medicine have led to a significant increase in the longevity of dogs, and age-related brain changes are becoming more recognized, such as cerebral microbleeds (CMBs), yet there are few studies describing their occurrence and epidemiology in dogs. CMBs are focal intraparenchymal signal voids on T2 gradient-echo magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The aim of this retrospective study was to describe the signalment and MRI findings in dogs with presumptive CMBs (pCMBs) and their association to concurrent age-related changes. Veterinary diagnostic center MRI database between January 2019 and September 2020 was reviewed. Signalment information such as breed, age and sex, and concurrent MRI findings were recorded and compared between groups. A total of 747 dogs underwent 1.5T brain MRI with standard sequences (T2, FLAIR, T1 pre and postcontrast and T2*) were included. One hundred and forty-two dogs (19%) met the inclusion criteria for pCMBs, while the remaining dogs were used as control cases. Dogs with pCMBs were older than control dogs (median 14 vs. 9 years) and the prevalence of pCMBs increased with age, especially in those older than 10 years. Small breed dogs were significantly more affected compared to large breed dogs. Most dogs had multiple pCMBs (62%) mainly with a lobar distribution (57.7%). Brain atrophy was significantly identified concurrently with pCMBs in 61.3% of dogs and with leukoaraiosis in 58% of dogs. In conclusion, findings from the current study support that presumptive cerebral microbleeds are a common age-related MRI finding in smaller-breed dogs frequently associated with brain atrophy.

Keywords: magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), dogs, age-related changes, brain atrophy, white matter hyperintensities