

Tracheal Collapse

Tracheal collapse occurs in miniature or toy breeds of dogs. It causes a dry cough or a 'goose honk' cough. Sometimes the coughing is so severe that the dog is unable to breathe at all and collapses at exercise or excitement and the owner may notice that the tongue and gums are blue in colour. When the dog relaxes again, the pink colour returns and they are able to move around again.

The trachea should be a relatively firm tube that allows air to move freely during respiration when negative pressure is created by breathing in. If the tube is weak (collapsed) then when the dog breathes in it collapses and becomes closed and restricts air flow. This causes inflammation and increased secretions in the airways that exacerbate the effect of the obstruction during breathing in these very small airways. If the collapse is untreated there is a risk of sudden death if the dog gets over excited and cannot breathe, or the collapse can extend into the bronchi (smaller airways) and be very difficult to treat.

Some dogs are only very mildly affected and can be treated medically. Others require insertion of a stent into the trachea to hold it open.

Medical management

Medical management is always the mainstay of treatment. Even if a stent is placed, it will still be necessary to manage the symptoms with medication and control of the environment.

It is important to remember that your dog must *live in a controlled environment*. This means no exposure to airsprays (floor polish, furniture fresheners, hair sprays, perfumes, grass cuttings or dusty environments etc) or cigarette smoke (including clothes smelling of smoke). This is because anything that may cause coughing or continued airway irritation will risk causing lower airway collapse to progress.

Always use a harness and never put a collar on your dog. Never apply any sort of pressure to the neck area.

Keep your dog on the slim side. Extra weight, especially around the neck area will make the symptoms worse.

Do not allow your dog to come into contact with other dogs that could infect yours with kennel cough as this will make the tracheal collapse very symptomatic. We usually recommend that dogs are vaccinated with an inactivated kennel cough vaccine, and not a live one (as the live one can cause coughing)

Treatments

We use medication long term to reduce the effects of the tracheal collapse, to reduce coughing and thereby reduce symptoms.

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Exceptional Care

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Diphenoxylate^{**}: your dog should remain on this medication *for* life. This reduces the secretions and dilates the airways. It will reduce the risks of coughing and deterioration of symptoms, or collapse.

Cough suppressants (butorphanol or codeine^{**}) – these drugs are used to prevent coughing and a flare up of airway disease.

Fluticasone inhaler^{**}: We often use inhaled steroids to reduce inflammation associated with the stent and to reduce side effects of steroids taken by mouth.

Steroid tablets (prednisolone): steroids are sometimes used to reduce inflammation when there is a flare up.

Antibiotics – may be used to treat occasional airway infections.

Check ups

Patients should be re-examined regularly for repeat prescriptions of the medication and to check body weight and exercise tolerance. We also listen to the chest carefully to check for wheezing or ‘snapping’ of the airways.

Management options

If medical management is not very successful and the coughing is persistent and the dog is unable to exercise normally, we can discuss placement of an endotracheal stent. This is placed inside the trachea and springs open to hold the airway open. It is not a simple procedure however, and complications can occur, so we only use this technique if medical management alone has been unsuccessful. Once the stent is placed, we still need to suppress coughing and inflammation long term with oral medication. We will also need to check the stent at regular intervals in the first 1-2 years after placement.

Anderson Moores Veterinary Specialists 2018

^{**} These drugs are not licensed for use in the dog and you should discuss this with your veterinary surgeon

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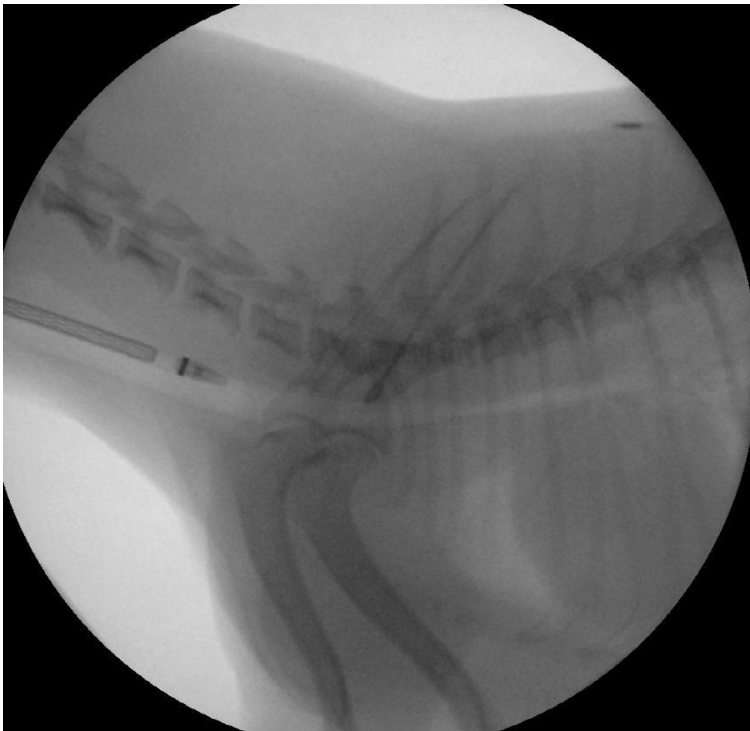


Image showing the preparation for stent placement. The narrowed trachea is visible in the chest



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Still images taken after successful stent placement

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