



Associated Veterinary Specialists, PC, LTD

12462G Natural Bridge Road

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Chronic Bronchitis

Bronchitis is inflammation of the small airways in the lungs. It can be acute and short lived with reversible changes or chronic with irreversible changes. This disease is most commonly seen in middle aged or older small breeds dogs and causes a persistent cough. The cause of chronic bronchitis is not completely understood, but thought to be secondary to many potential factors including chronic infections, pollution, aerosolized irritants and second-hand smoke exposure. It can also occur secondary to allergic airway disease.

Inflammation in the airways can lead to an excess buildup of mucus leading to an occlusion of the airways. This can lead to thickening of the bronchi, weakness of the airway walls and collapse. Common clinical signs that may be identified include the following:

- Persistent, intractable cough which may be followed by gagging
- Collapse and exercise intolerance
- Increased effort when breathing

Since there are many diseases that can have similar clinical signs to chronic bronchitis (congestive heart failure, collapsing trachea, pneumonia and lung cancer), it is important to proceed with diagnostics in a systematic fashion. Diagnostic tests that may be recommended by your veterinarian include the following:

- Chest x-rays
- Bronchoscopy- a procedure that allows the direct visualization of the airways using a long scope with a camera.
- Culture- during bronchoscopy, cultures of the fluid in the airways can be obtained to evaluate for bacterial growth
- Cytology- a sample of the airway fluid is obtained during the bronchoscopy to evaluate for inflammation, organisms or cancer cells

Chronic bronchitis is not a curable disease, but treatment can help to improve your pet's quality of life. Different routes of treatment are recommended based on the results of the diagnostic testing. Possible treatment recommendations may include:

- Elimination of environmental irritants
- Weight control
- Cough suppression



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- Treatment of an infection
- Treatment of inflammation
- Oxygen therapy, if indicated
- Nebulization therapy. For a video on how to nebulize your pet, please use the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pOCaI9UFIk>

Many patients with chronic bronchitis are overweight, which can worsen the clinical signs since the extra weight places pressure on the airways. Many pet's clinical signs can improve with the introduction of a weight loss plan.

It is important to remember that chronic bronchitis cannot be cured, but if the disease is caught early and can be resolved, your pet may improve dramatically and be well managed with continued medical therapy.

Kimberly Loyd, DVM, DACVIM

Reference: Seattle Veterinary Specialists