



INTERNAL MEDICINE:

Tracheal Collapse

Overview

Tracheal collapse is a progressive, degenerative disease of the tracheal rings. It most commonly affects toy and small breed older dogs. Affected dogs typically present with signs ranging from an intermittent “goose-honk” cough to severe respiratory dyspnea from upper airway obstruction.

Medical therapy

Medical therapy includes anti-inflammatories, antitussives, and/or sedatives in most cases. Medical therapy is generally effective in early stages of the disease. Weight loss, exercise restriction, and removal of environmental allergens are also recommended for these patients. As the disease progresses, medical therapy ultimately becomes ineffective and surgical or interventional treatment becomes necessary.

Surgical treatment

The most common surgical procedure for animals with collapsing trachea is the placement of extra-luminal ring prostheses. Unfortunately, this procedure is only effective in dogs with extra-thoracic (cervical) tracheal collapse. In dogs with intra-thoracic tracheal collapse, the current recommended therapy is **Intra-luminal tracheal stenting**. Michigan Veterinary Specialists now offers the placement of intra-luminal tracheal stenting through our Internal Medicine department.

Intra-luminal tracheal stents are fluoroscopically placed over the collapsed region of the trachea in order to improve quality of life and clinical signs. Improvement in clinical signs has been reported in 75 – 90% of dogs treated with intra-luminal stents.

Tracheal stenting is not a cure for tracheal collapse and most dogs must still be managed on medical therapy following the procedure. However, when used appropriately tracheal stenting can significantly improve a patient’s quality of life when medical therapy is no longer clinically effective.

Complications

Immediate complications are typically minor, although a peri-operative mortality rate of up to 10% has been reported. Late complications include stent fracture, formation of granulation tissue through the stent, progressive tracheal collapse, and stent shortening or migration.

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Michigan Veterinary Specialists provides Internal Medicine Service at all three hospital locations. A member of the medicine team is on-call 24/7 to provide consultations to MVS emergency doctors and to perform the emergency services. Our specialists are available for questions and consultations on medical conditions during the weekdays.

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