



**INTERNAL MEDICINE:  
Chronic Rhinitis in Dogs**

**Clinical Signs**

Sneezing and nasal discharge are usually associated with diseases of the nose, paranasal sinuses and nasopharynx. Sneezing frequently precedes the onset of notable nasal discharge. A peracute onset of explosive sneezing is often seen initially in dogs with nasal foreign bodies. Regardless of the underlying cause, sneezing may diminish while the nasal discharge often worsens. Therefore, dogs with chronic rhinitis frequently present with chronic nasal discharge rather than persistent sneezing.

**Diagnostic Approach**

Clinical history and physical examination generally indicate primary nasal disease over systemic or extranasal disease. CBC, serum chemistries, urinalysis, coagulation profile, blood pressure and thoracic radiographs are important to rule out most of the systemic or extranasal causes for nasal discharge.

Anesthesia is required for further evaluation of most dogs with rhinitis. A thorough oral exam with inspection of the hard palate, oropharynx and dental structures should be performed.

Diagnostic imaging is essential in most dogs with chronic rhinitis. Due to the complexity of the nose and overlying bony structures, radiographs rarely offer the information required to make a diagnosis.

Computed Tomography (CT) is the imaging modality of choice for precise evaluation of diseases within the nasal cavity, determining the extent of the disease and in differentiating infectious or inflammatory disease from nasal neoplasia. Because nasal CT will clearly demonstrate the location and extent of nasal disease, it is often used to help guide post-imaging rhinoscopy and biopsy procedures. If routine diagnostics do not provide a cause for rhinitis, referral to an institution providing CT imaging is very much advised.

Rhinoscopy is performed to visualize the nasopharynx and nasal cavities, although visualization of the latter is difficult due to size of the scope relative to the nasal cavity. Similar to biopsy, rhinoscopy should be performed after all imaging studies are completed to avoid endoscopy-induced hemorrhage which obscures visualization of abnormalities.

**Causes, Treatment &  
Outcomes**

The primary diseases associated with chronic nasal disease are sinonasal neoplasia, idiopathic lymphoplasmacytic rhinitis, fungal rhinitis, dental disease and chronic nasal foreign bodies. Some important extranasal disorders that may present with nasal discharge are coagulopathies, vasculitis, hypertension, hyperviscosity syndrome and pneumonia, all of which often present with additional systemic signs.

**Fungal Rhinitis** is a common cause of chronic rhinitis throughout North America. Aspergillus fumigatus is the most common cause of fungal rhinitis in dogs. Although it may occur in older dogs, it is most often seen in young to middle aged dogs. Despite properly obtained samples there are some cases that fail to demonstrate fungal organisms. Repeated sampling or a trial of anti-fungal drugs may be indicated in dogs with a high index of suspicion for nasal aspergillosis (largely based on nasal CT and imaging studies).

Prognosis for treatment of nasal aspergillosis is fair to good, but relapses are possible necessitating re-treatment. Debridement of diseased turbinate structures

through the rostral nares prior to topical therapy will greatly improve response to treatment.

**Idiopathic Lymphoplasmacytic (Chronic) Rhinitis** is another common cause of chronic nasal disease in the dog. The definitive etiology remains un-determined, however it is likely a stereotyped chronic inflammatory response to multiple precipitating factors. Inhaled aeroallergens and irritants likely play a primary role in development of this disease. Middle to older aged large breed dogs and Dachshunds are typically affected.

Treatment is extremely frustrating with cure rarely achieved. Although it is not a life-threatening disease, the frequent nasal discharge can be tiresome for the owner.

**Nasal Neoplasia** is an important cause of chronic nasal disease in middle aged to older dogs. Nasal neoplasia accounts for nearly one third of all dogs with chronic nasal disease. Radiation therapy is the treatment of choice for most nasal tumors. Depending on the mode of radiation therapy, approximate median survival times are between 16.5-23 months and one year survival rates are between 54-60%.

**Internal Medicine Experts:**

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MVS offers full-time internal medicine service at BOTH HOSPITALS and our internists serve as an extension of your practice. Internal medicine service is offered at Auburn Hills Tues.-Fri. and in Southfield Mon.-Fri., and select Saturdays. Our clinicians have years of specialized training and experience. Please let us know how we can help you and your clients.

**Questions?**

Our internists are available for questions and consultations on medical conditions. They are also on-call for in-house consultation on medicine cases seen through the emergency service. Our internists review critical medical cases.

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