



Swelling due to salivary mucocoele

What is a salivary mucocoele?

A salivary mucocoele is a collection of saliva that has leaked from a damaged salivary gland or duct. The causes of a salivary mucocoele include trauma, stones in the salivary duct and tumours, however most are idiopathic i.e. we don't know the cause.

This condition is usually seen in dogs and very rarely in cats. All breeds are susceptible but there seems to be an increased incidence in Poodles, German Shepherds, Dachshunds and toy breeds. The most common sign is a soft swelling of the neck or under the tongue.

How do we investigate salivary mucocoeles?

Most salivary mucocoeles can be diagnosed on clinical signs. Aspiration of the fluid can be performed to confirm the evidence of saliva rather than an abscess. Aspiration of a clear, yellowish or blood-tinged thick fluid with a low cell count is consistent with saliva. An elevation of the white blood cell count in the fluid may indicate an infection or abscess, which will require management prior to definitive treatment of the mucocoele. Radiographs/CT are rarely needed to diagnose salivary mucocoeles, however, if a tumour is suspected, imaging of the chest is indicated to look for metastasis (spread to the lungs).

How can we treat salivary mucocoeles?

Draining of a mucocoele will occasionally resolve the problem for a few weeks/months; but most will reoccur. Repeated drainage also risks introducing bacteria into the mucocoele which can cause an abscess. 'Marsupialisation' of the mucocoele may be attempted. Marsupialisation involves removing a portion of the capsule of the mucocoele and stitching the mucocoele to the inside of the mouth - saliva will then drain directly into the mouth and be swallowed. However, the most successful and recommended treatment for a salivary mucocoele is surgical removal of the affected salivary glands.

What kind of aftercare is required following surgery?

Your pet will be hospitalised for 1-2 days. Your pet will be discharged with pain relief. Suture removal will be required 7-10 days post-operatively. Until suture removal your pet should be room rested and taken out into the garden for toileting purposes.

What kind of outcome is expected?

Surgical removal of the abnormal salivary gland usually results in resolution of clinical signs and an excellent prognosis. Recovery from surgery is usually quick, but it can take several days for the mucocoele swelling to subside. The presence of other salivary glands compensate for the loss of saliva production from the glands which have been removed, therefore a dry mouth does not occur. Complications are uncommon, but can include swelling of the wound (seroma), infection, and recurrence of clinical signs if inadequate glandular tissue is removed.

Chestergates Veterinary Specialists

Tel: 01244 853 823 Fax: 01244 853 824
Email: info@chestergates.org.uk
Website: www.chestergates.org.uk

Units E & F, Telford Court
Gates Lane,
Chester CH1 6LT

