

INFLAMMATION OF THE VAGINA (VAGINITIS)

BASICS

OVERVIEW

- “Vaginal” refers to the vagina; the “vagina” is the tubular passageway leading from the opening of the vulva to the cervix of the uterus; “vulvar” refers to the vulva; the “vulva” is the external genitalia of females
- “Vaginitis” is inflammation of the vagina or vestibule (space at the entrance of the vagina)
- “Bitch” is a female dog

SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

Species

- Primarily dogs

Mean Age and Range

- Anatomic abnormalities and inflammation of the vagina in animals prior to puberty (known as “prepubertal vaginitis”)—suspect in bitches that have not gone through puberty
- May occur at any age in any breed or with any ovarian status (that is, whether intact or spayed)

Predominant Sex

- Females

SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Discharge from the vulva
- Frequent voiding of small volumes of urine (known as “pollakiuria”)
- Vaginal licking
- Spotting
- Scooting
- Attracting males
- Discharge from the vagina; vaginal discharge is any substance (such as blood, mucus, pus) coming from the vagina, through the vulvar opening
- Possibly inflamed vulva and vagina

CAUSES

- Immature vagina (prior to puberty)
- Foreign bodies
- Urinary tract infections
- Vaginal trauma
- Urine or feces contamination in patients with certain congenital (present at birth) anatomic abnormalities
- Urine contamination in patients with ectopic ureters; the ureters are tubes from the kidneys to the bladder; during development, they may not attach to the bladder properly or may attach to reproductive organs instead; when this occurs, they are called “ectopic ureters” and one or both can terminate in the lower urethra, uterus, or vagina
- Inability to control urination (known as “incontinence”) owing to low levels of estrogen (known as “hypoestrogenism”)
- Tumor or cancer of the vagina—such as transmissible venereal tumor; leiomyoma
- Bacterial infections, such as *Pasteurella*; *Streptococcus*; *E. coli*; *Pseudomonas*; *Mycoplasma*; *Chlamydia*; *Brucella canis*
- Viral infection—herpes
- Localized accumulation of blood in the vagina (known as a “vaginal hematoma”)
- Vaginal abscess
- Medications or products containing male hormones (known as “androgens”)
- Narrowing of the entrance to the vagina (known as a “vestibulovaginal stricture”)
- Zinc toxicity reported

RISK FACTORS

- Medications or products containing male hormones (androgens)—may cause enlargement of the clitoris (known as “clitoral hypertrophy”)
- Prophylactic antibiotics—may alter the normal vaginal bacteria and allow overgrowth of disease-causing species
- Anatomic abnormalities in bitches prior to going through puberty

TREATMENT

HEALTH CARE

- Usually treated as outpatients
- Inpatient—surgical management of anatomic abnormalities, foreign bodies, or tumors/cancer

ACTIVITY

- Normal

DIET

- Normal

SURGERY

- Remove or treat any inciting causes—foreign body; tumor or cancer; anatomic abnormalities
- Surgical removal of the vagina (known as “vaginectomy”)—has been used in patients that do not respond to medical treatment

MEDICATIONS

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive.

Inflammation of the Vagina Prior to Puberty (Prepubertal Vaginitis)

- Inflammation of the vagina in a bitch prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—[diethylstilbestrol](#) to induce “heat” or “estrus” may help; long-term effects not documented; discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with your pet’s veterinarian

Primary Inflammation of the Vagina (Vaginitis)

- Appropriate systemic antibiotics—normally eradicate susceptible bacteria within 24 hours
- Vaginal douches, as directed by your pet’s veterinarian—0.05% chlorhexidine or 0.5% povidone-iodine twice daily until the discharge resolves; reported to be beneficial

FOLLOW-UP CARE

PATIENT MONITORING

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—re-examine after the first “heat” or “estrus” or when physical maturity is reached
- Mature patients—re-examine after a 14-day course of antibiotics
- If condition persists—reevaluate for an underlying or another cause; perform a vaginal bacterial culture and sensitivity test

PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE

- Some rationale may be considered for delaying spaying (ovariohysterectomy) until after the first “heat” or “estrus” in patients prior to puberty with long-term (chronic) inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis), because some cases do not respond to medical treatment after the patient is spayed

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—normally resolves after the first “heat” or “estrus”
- Adults—inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis) usually resolves if the causative factor is removed; antibiotic therapy and vaginal douches may hasten recovery of uncomplicated, long-term (chronic) cases to within 2 weeks

KEY POINTS

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis) normally resolves after the first “heat” or “estrus” and antibiotic therapy is not needed
- Inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis) in adults often is associated with a correctable predisposing factor
- Spaying (ovariohysterectomy) and isolation of patients should be considered for patients infected with *Brucella canis*
- Medications or products containing male hormones (androgens) or estrogens must be discontinued, as directed by your pet’s veterinarian