

GINGIVOSTOMATITIS AND CAUDAL STOMATITIS

(INFLAMMATION OF THE GUMS AND MOUTH)

BASICS

OVERVIEW

- Excessive inflammation, caused by an immune process, affecting the gums and mouth in cats
- “Gingivostomatitis” is inflammation of the gums and other moist tissues (known as “mucous membranes”) of the mouth
- “Stomatitis” is inflammation of the moist tissues of the mouth
- “Caudal” refers to the back or rear; in this condition, it describes the location in the mouth—the back portion of the mouth

SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

Species

- Cat

Breed Predilections

- Purebred cats more likely than other cats—Abyssinian, Persian, Himalayan, Burmese, Siamese, and Somali

SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Excessive salivation/drooling (known as “ptyalism”)
- Bad breath (known as “halitosis”)
- Difficulty swallowing (known as “dysphagia”)
- Lack of appetite (known as “anorexia”—prefers soft food)
- Weight loss
- Scruffy haircoat
- Reddened, ulcerated lesions with rapidly growing tissue (known as “proliferative tissue”) affecting the gums (known as “gingiva”); the folds of moist tissue extending from the soft palate to the side of the tongue (known as the “glossopalatine arches”); tongue; lips; lining of the cheeks (known as “buccal mucosa”); and/or hard palate
- Inflammation of the gums completely surrounds the tooth
- May extend to the folds of moist tissue extending from the tongue to the wall of the throat or pharynx (known as the “glossopharyngeal arches”), as well as the palate

CAUSES

- Unknown
- Bacterial, viral and immune-mediated causes are suspected
- Feline calici virus
- Decreased immune response (known as “immunosuppression”) from feline leukemia virus (FeLV) or feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) also can lead to poorly responsive infections; however, most cats affected with gingivostomatitis or caudal stomatitis are negative for FeLV and FIV

TREATMENT

HEALTH CARE

- Initial therapy involves professional teeth cleaning (above and below the gums [gingiva]), as well as strict home care
- Dental X-rays should be taken before and after surgery
- Postoperative application of fluocinonide 0.05% (Lidex® Gel) to the gum margin may help in the healing process

SURGERY

- Biopsy (especially for lesions involving only one side of the mouth) to rule out cancer—primarily squamous cell carcinoma
- Extraction of the teeth behind the canine teeth (that is, the premolar and molar teeth) will result in resolution in 60% of the cases, without further need of medication
- If patient does not respond to extraction of the teeth behind the canine teeth (that is, the premolar and molar teeth), remove all remaining teeth; when extracting the teeth, pay meticulous attention to removing all tooth substance
- CO₂ laser may be used to decrease inflamed tissue

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.

- Medication and other therapies have been used with limited long-term success; lack of permanent response to conventional oral hygiene products, antibiotics, anti-inflammatory drugs, and drugs to decrease the immune response (known as “immunosuppressive drugs”) is typical
- Antibiotics—clindamycin, metronidazole, amoxicillin, ampicillin, enrofloxacin, tetracycline
- Steroids—to decrease the immune response; such as prednisone; methylprednisolone also may help control inflammation
- Gold salts—Solganal® (Schering); used to treat serious immune-mediated diseases
- Chlorambucil, a chemotherapy drug to decrease the immune response
- Bovine lactoferrin is a protein found in cow’s milk that may have antibacterial activity and may have an affect on the immune system; it can be applied to the moist tissues (known as “mucous membranes”) of the mouth
- Interferon is a protein produced by cells of the immune system; has a variety of effects in the body, including fighting viruses and cancer
- Cyclosporine, to decrease the immune response

FOLLOW-UP CARE

PATIENT MONITORING

- Monitor response to treatment; if patient does not respond to extraction of the teeth behind the canine teeth (that is, the premolar and molar teeth), remove all remaining teeth

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Cases with extensive lesions of rapidly growing tissue (proliferative tissue) in the back part of the mouth and throat (pharynx) that respond poorly to treatment warrant a more guarded prognosis

KEY POINTS

- Excessive inflammation, caused by an immune process, affecting the gums and mouth in cats
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