



COLLAPSING TRACHEA

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Collapsing trachea is the loss of stability anywhere along the length of the trachea, which is a long column of cartilage rings that extend from the oral cavity to the lungs. These cartilage rings function to keep the trachea open while breathing occurs. Toy-breed canine patients are susceptible to these rings losing their rigidity, causing them to collapse while breathing.

The most common sign associated with a **collapsing trachea** is a nonproductive (dry) cough described as a “goose honk.” This cough is typically triggered by excitement, anxiety, exercise, eating or drinking, being overheated, and mild pulling on the collar. During severe coughing fits or strong coughing, patients may vomit or gag up saliva, food, or water.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Collapsing trachea is usually diagnosed based on a combination of symptoms and thorough physical examination.

X-rays (radiographs) can occasionally be used to visualize narrowing of the trachea but can sometimes be difficult to time perfectly when radiographs are taken.

TREATMENT

There are no specific medical treatments for **collapsing trachea**.

Medical management is often one or a combination of the following strategies:

- Sedatives – Will help patients relax, prevent excitement, and reduce anxiety during coughing fits.
- Cough suppressants – Will help lessen the duration and frequency of coughing fits.
- Bronchodilators – Will not dilate the trachea but helps relax bronchi that may have become irritated from coughing.

Surgical management exists for **collapsing trachea**, where specialists place an expanding mesh material (tracheal stint) to help keep the airway open. This technique is met with mixed efficacy.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Keep patients within normal weight, walk on a harness, prevent walking during hot days, and reduce stress.
- No medication will fix the trachea but can help minimize some of the symptoms.