



Prepubertal Vaginitis & Stricture

Your puppy has been diagnosed today with vaginitis, or inflammation of the vagina. Although this is a fairly common disorder in puppies, it has historically been very under-diagnosed. Fortunately, it is not a life-threatening problem, and typically resolves well with time and appropriate treatment. Without treatment, dogs may experience persistent vaginitis, recurrent urinary tract infections, and other life-long problems. There are two basic components to puppy vaginitis: infection and vaginal stricture.

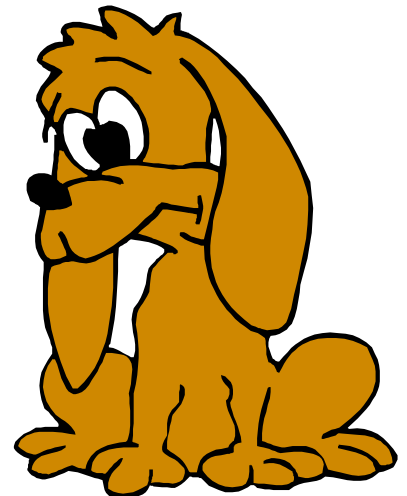
Vaginal Stricture

Vaginal stricture (also called “annular ring”) is caused by the presence of a tough internal membrane obstructing vaginal outflow. This causes retention of vaginal discharges and sometimes urine, which provides perfect conditions for the growth of bacteria, as discussed below. It is not always present in vaginitis cases, but is common enough that we strongly recommend performing a “stricture exam” with all affected puppies. This exam is different from your regular puppy exams, and is performed under heavy sedation to minimize discomfort to your pup. Once sedated, topical lidocaine is applied with a gloved finger, and the vaginal vault is explored for the presence of a stricture. If found, the membrane is broken down manually to improve vaginal drainage. For the first few days after a stricture reduction, you may notice some bloody discharge or discomfort when your pup urinates. This is common, and oral pain medications will be sent home to minimize her discomfort.

It is not unusual for the stricture to initially reform to some degree, and your pup may require successive stricture reductions until it remains open. Fortunately, each consecutive exam becomes less uncomfortable for her, and often sedation is not needed after the first exam. Exams are spaced two weeks apart to allow appropriate time for healing.

Vaginal Infection

As noted above, the second component of vaginitis is infection of the reproductive tract. This is in part due to immaturity of the reproductive tract, similar to the skin rashes that babies get, and to some extent will resolve on its own as her genital tract matures with her first estrus (“heat”). This is why in vaginitis cases we recommend waiting until after the first heat cycle to have your puppy spayed --- allowing the reproductive tract to fully mature. This is contrary to our usual recommendation to have pets spayed prior to first heat in order to prevent other health problems, such as pyometra and a higher risk of breast cancer. Fortunately, allowing a single heat does not sufficiently increase the risk of these diseases to outweigh the benefit in resolving vaginitis. She can



then be spayed a few months after she finishes estrus.

Your veterinarian will likely prescribe antibiotics to help control the infection until her first heat cycle. Ideally, we would prefer to send a sample of the vaginal discharge off to our outside lab for culture and sensitivity first --- this test grows the bacteria to determine exactly which antibiotics will work best, as opposed to our “best guess” antibiotic. Your veterinarian may also send home a medicated shampoo to gently wash her vulva, especially if drainage is severe. We do not recommend douching, as this may further upset the bacterial balance in her reproductive tract, as well as increasing the risk of damage to the vaginal mucosa.

Treating vaginitis can sometimes be frustrating for owners, because there is no one “quick, easy fix”. Each pet is different, and likewise, each will have different needs. Some strictures will resolve with one or two rechecks, others may require several. We will do our best, however, to make the process as simple for you and as comfortable for your pup as possible.

If you have further questions, please feel free to call us at (920) 725-8522.

