

Mega-esophagus

What is it?

A condition affecting the musculature of the esophagus. Food is not moved down the esophagus and into the stomach and stays in the esophagus. As more food is ingested, the esophagus gets larger and more full of food.

What causes it?

Causes are varied. Infectious disease is unlikely. There are congenital causes of megaesophagus. Trauma from a foreign body can cause mega-e. Secondary causes are related to nerve function and include laryngeal paralysis and myasthenia gravis. Many cases are idiopathic and a cause is not identified.



Signs & Symptoms

Regurgitation is commonly seen. That is vomiting without effort and the food generally comes out in a tube shape. Aspiration pneumonia is a common sequela of mega-e.

Prognosis:

If an underlying disease can be identified and treated, generally the prognosis is good unless it has been long standing. Idiopathic megaesophagus can only be treated with management and generally cannot be cured.

Breeding implications/genetics:

Affected dogs should not be bred, especially if a cause for the mega-e can be identified.

More Information:

<https://www.animalimaging.net/pet-owners/small-animal-services/fluoroscopy/>
<https://bluepearlveter.com/blog/what-is-megaesophagus-in-dogs/>

Testing & Treatment

How is it diagnosed?

Thoracic radiographs show a large, food filled structure in the chest on both survey films and contrast. Fluoroscopy can diagnose abnormal movement of food through the upper GI tract.

How is it treated?

Address the underlying cause, if one can be identified. Medical management consists of elevated feeding, feeding a gruel or meatballs (depends on the dog) and pro-motility drugs. Surgical management will depend on the condition. Persistent right aortic arch is a band of tissue around the esophagus and is seen in puppies and kittens. If cut early enough, the esophagus should return to normal.

This information is not meant to be a substitute for veterinary care.

Always follow the instructions provided by your veterinarian.

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