

Beginner's Primer for Megaesophagus Management

Suggestions for your veterinarian:

a) Do not assume gloom and doom. With dedication of owner and DVM many of these pets can live relatively normal lives.

b) Test for Addison's, Myasthenia Gravis, hypothyroidism and lead toxicity (if lead exposure). Perform a thyroid panel, not just a T4, as sick euthyroid may erroneously suggest hypothyroidism.

c) 3 view x-rays of chest to rule out pneumonia - if present treat at LEAST 4 weeks. Do not depend on auscultation, alone, for diagnosis. Clinical signs of pneumonia may precede radiographic signs by 1-3 days. If suspect AP, TREAT. Consider albuterol nebulizer treatments as adjunctive therapy. If pet has had AP, consider dispensing a "starter" supply of antibiotics for use as needed. Owner can purchase additional doses after starting. A nebulizer can be purchased from some pharmacies, medical supply houses, or ebay. Good brands of nebulizer are PulmoMate, PulmoNaide, Omron. See "nebulizer" information in the LINKS at www.morrisvet.com.

Suggestions for YOU:

Here is a "typical" (but, not the ONLY) protocol for Megae dogs. It is a place to start:

1) Administer a dose of promotility medication (metoclopramide, cisapride, or other) 15-30 minutes prior to eating.

2) Feed 4-5 times daily w/ the dog's body perpendicular to the floor so food "falls" through the esophagus into the stomach. (consider using a Bailey chair or other method of feeding the dog in a VERTICAL position during and after). This takes advantage of gravity, allowing the esophagus contents to "fall" into the stomach. Other suggestions for vertical feeding can be seen in the "feeding/sleeping..." album in the Photos section of the Megaesophagus Yahoo Group.

Bailey chair pictures:

<http://www.caninemegaesophagus.org/support.htm>

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/megaesophagus/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/megaesophagus/photos/album/1082975248/pic/list>

Instructions for Building A Bailey Chair:

A dvd/vhs/cd can be ordered from matthew1@earthlink.net, for \$6.60. The fee does NOT include any profit, but, rather production of copies, mailers, copy paper & printer ink for insert copies, blank DVDs and cases for DVDs.

Some owners contact boy scouts, high school shop classes, handymen, etc, to build the chairs if they do not feel they are handy enough.

In addition, Neal Moor (thechairbuilder@yahoo.com) will build a chair and charges ONLY for the cost of materials and shipping. (Shipping is often more costly than the cost of materials). Payment is required before building occurs, as if the purchaser decides they don't want the chair, Mr. Moor should not have to 'eat' the cost of materials. More info can be found here: <http://www.caninemegaesophagus.org/support.htm>

3) Administer acid neutralizer with the meal (Pepcid AC, Prilosec, etc.) at night; 2-3 times daily if Zantac or Pepcid with one of the feedings.

4) Administer Carafate (A "bandage" for ulcers or erosions in the esophagus or stomach) 2 hours prior to bedtime; or, if required more often, liquid Carafate can be given 1 hour BEFORE, or 2 hours AFTER any other medication, or food. (Carafate will bind to anything else, except water, therefore, to allow the Carafate to "bandage" esophagus erosions, it needs NOT to be attached to food, or anything else).

5) Administer antacid right before bed to minimize acid in stomach, so if reflux from the esophagus occurs from the stomach while the dog is laying down, it is not as acidic. Acid inhibitors are SUPPOSED to be given on an empty stomach, but, most owners report help even if given WITH food.

6) Attempt to have dog sleep with front end elevated, for example in a crate with the front end elevated. Using a Procollar to keep the head elevated may also minimize night-time regurgitation. There are pictures in the photo section, in the "feeding/sleeping..." album, of the Megaesophagus Yahoo Group.

Dr. Kathy Morris 8-26-09