

TRACHEAL COLLAPSE

Collapse of the trachea is a condition where the windpipe is flattened instead of being rounded. It occurs most commonly in middle-aged to older smaller breed dogs that are overweight.

The trachea is composed of cartilage rings in the shape of a “C.” The open part of the “C” is located on top of the trachea and is composed of muscles and ligaments that hold the “tube” together. In cases of tracheal collapse, the windpipe collapses much like a soda straw does when sucked with excessive pressure. This decreases the size of the airway limiting movement of air within the windpipe thereby causing breathing difficulty and a cough or “honking” sound. If the collapse occurs in the part of the windpipe located in the lower neck before reaching the chest, then the collapse occurs upon inspiration. If the segment of the trachea involved is located within the chest, then the collapse occurs when the pet exhales the air. If both segments are involved, then the collapse is constant, but clinical signs are usually worse on expiration.

CAUSE of this condition is unknown. *Obesity* is commonly associated with tracheal collapse. It may be the result of a weakening of the tissue from bouts of bronchitis or other respiratory infections.

DIAGNOSIS of tracheal collapse is confirmed by radiographs (x-rays) and/or endoscopic examination (where a lighted tube is passed down the airway).

TREATMENT. Most cases are successfully treated with medications. Some complicated cases may require surgery. Surgery, however, is not guaranteed to solve the problem.

*Please understand that tracheal collapse is **CONTROLLABLE** (coughing can be decreased 75-90%), but it is **NOT CURABLE**.* It is important to minimize respiratory infections to prevent recurrent episodes. It is important to keep vaccinations current to help prevent some of the more common causes of bronchitis in dogs.