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## SALIVARY MUCOCELES

**What is it?** A salivary mucocele is a collection of saliva in the soft tissues resulting from damage to a salivary gland or its duct, which then allows the saliva to leak out. It can occur in several locations depending on which gland or duct is affected; however, the most common site is in the neck region under the chin.

**What animals are affected?** Any animal can be affected; however we see salivary mucoceles almost exclusively in dogs. Some dogs that chew on bones or sticks may be predisposed but we really don't know how, why, or when the duct becomes damaged in most cases.

**What are the signs?** Dogs with a salivary mucocele usually develop a soft fluctuant swelling that will enlarge over time. If a needle aspirate is done or the swelling is drained, the character of the fluid tends to be very thick and stringy (like saliva) and is sometimes blood tinged. If the zygomatic gland is affected, they will have a swelling under the eye and the eye may look like it is being pushed a bit. If the sublingual glands are affected, there will be a swelling under the tongue (called a rannula), and they can also demonstrate respiratory distress if the swelling is in the back of the mouth—a pharyngeal mucocele.

**How is it diagnosed?** Diagnosis is made by history, appearance, and location of the swelling, as well as aspirates of the swelling to find the characteristic fluid.

**How is it treated?** Salivary mucoceles are treated by draining the swelling and then removing the affected salivary gland(s) to remove the source of the saliva.

**What aftercare is needed?** We recommend restricted activity for 10-14 days and monitoring of the incision. Sometimes if the mucocele was very large, we may initially bandage the site to help decrease the “dead space” and allow the stretched skin to return to more normal. Once sutures are removed, the pet should be able to return to normal activity.

**What is the prognosis?** Prognosis is very good and surgery is usually curative.

**Can it be prevented?** Minimizing the use of choke collars, and playing/chewing on sticks and other rough, irregular objects may decrease the chance of trauma to the salivary glands and ducts.

Click to learn more about [Salivary Mucoceles](#)