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Stomatitis has many definitions and presentations. It is essentially a chronic, debilitating bacterial infection and inflammation of the oral tissues that usually begins in the periodontium, which is the soft tissue surrounding the teeth (the gums) or facial area (the oropharyngeal area). Other names include lymphocytic – plasmacytic stomatitis (LPS) complex and recurrent, severe periodontal disease.

Though viruses and immune disorders (lymphocytic plasmacytic stomatitis) have been implicated in the cause of stomatitis, many cases of LPS ever find the cause. It appears that this disease complex is a progressive oral disease which can be made worse by bacterial infection so good oral hygiene is best.

Stomatitis/LPS, in sever cases, can result in a severe, oral infection causing mouth pain, weight loss, behavioral changes and rough hair coat. This disease complex is undoubtedly the most painful physical entity that cats suffer.

Other diseases can appear similar to stomatitis. For example, severe periodontal disease is a deep infection of the gums and surrounding tissues, which may lead to bone and tooth loss. One of our vets will access during the dental using probing/x-rays to determine the extent of the lesion.

IF we suspect your cat has stomatitis **Watch For**

- Depression
- Loss of appetite
- Bleeding from the mouth
- Behavioral changes (hiding)
- Bad breath
- Difficulty eating

Diagnosis of cause of stomatitis and severity:

Diagnostic tests can be used to help recognize causes of stomatitis and exclude other diseases. Tests may include:

- A complete medical history and physical examination, concentrating on a thorough oral exam of your cat, is important. The oral examination must be done under general anesthesia in order to achieve a correct diagnosis.
- Complete periodontal probing and dental chartings are important in order to follow the disease. General anesthesia is needed for a thorough oral examination and periodontal probing (a blunt probe that is used to check the gum/tooth interface).
- Mouth radiographs (X-rays) are important to evaluate your cat's teeth. Seventy percent of the tooth structure is below the gumline. X-rays can show bone loss due to periodontal disease and helps determine whether teeth can be saved or, in severe bone loss of 90 percent, extracted. The X-rays may need to be repeated every three to six months depending on the course of this disease process. This is most recommend in cases where lesions appear in multiples.

- Blood chemistries, a complete blood count (CBC) and urinalysis may be recommended to determine the general health of your cat. These tests are also recommended prior to anesthesia.

Additional diagnostic tests may be recommended on a case-by-case basis. These may include:

- Biopsies of the discolored tissues can be done, but they invariably contain lymphocytes, a specific white blood cell. This is the oral response seen in infected oral tissues so, unless cancer is suspected, then biopsy is of little benefit unless the lesions are severe.

Treatment

The patient is prepared for anesthesia by fasting for at least three hours before the procedure. Treatment includes:

- **IN SEVERE CASES:** Intravenous combination antimicrobials (antibiotics) and fluids (if needed in sick or dehydrated patients). Antibiotics are often given for five to seven days before the procedure, but have limited effect.
- Ultrasonic scaling (cleaning) and root planing (cleaning the teeth under the gums) should be done. Anesthesia is needed for this procedure.
- Extractions (pulling teeth) or crown amputations may be done if indicated by X-rays. Extractions work by removing the source of sensitivity (bacteria covered tooth). Sometimes partial to full mouth extractions are necessary. A crown amputation is a procedure in which the visible portion of the tooth (the crown) is removed leaving the root (the part of the tooth under the gums). The gum is typically sutured over the root.
- Pain should be treated as needed.

Home Care

Give antibiotics as directed if given by your veterinarian. Daily tooth brushing with tooth paste (at minimum 2x weekly) is important for your cat's good oral health.

Dental care diets or treats can be helpful to maintain a healthy mouth. Chlorhexidine rinses, Plaqueoff (not for hyperthyroid cats) are excellent at killing plaque under the gumline or for cats that won't allow brushing.

Follow-up with your veterinarian as directed (often every three, six, or twelve months depending on severity) for re-evaluation. Semi-annual to annual tooth cleaning by ultrasonic scaling may be recommended.

Recommended products may include: Toothbrush (soft), CET® toothpaste, CET® enzymatic toothpaste, Dentavet® toothpaste, Chlorhexidine gluconate products such as CHX® rinse, CHX® guard gel, Hexarinse® solution and Dentivet® toothpaste, Plaqueoff, Hill's Prescription Diet T/D® *Holistic supplements (Colostrums, Standard Process). Ask one of our doctors for the above products.