



REVERSE SNEEZE

What is Going on With My Pet?

Sneezing, gagging and reversed sneezing are reflex responses to some form of irritation in the upper respiratory (nasal) passages. Sneezing is the reflexive expulsion of air outward through the nasal cavity and is commonly associated with a nasal discharge. Nasal discharges may be watery, contain mucus and/or pus, be blood tinged or be frank blood (epistaxis), or contain food debris. Reverse sneezing is the term given to the repetitive, forceful inspiratory efforts (backward snorting) elicited after irritation of the nasopharynx (nasal throat area). Gagging and retching are involuntary, reflexive attempts to clear secretions from the pharynx or upper respiratory or gastrointestinal tract.

What is Causing It?

There are a large number of possible causes for these actions in a pet. If there is a nasal discharge in one nostril we tend to consider local problems on that side of the nasal passages: foreign body, polyp, tumor, sinusitis, abscessed tooth, etc. If a discharge is present in both nostrils we tend to think of systemic diseases: canine distemper, feline respiratory viruses, fungal infections, etc. The discharge itself can be very helpful in the diagnosis—microscopic examinations and possibly culturing it in the laboratory, for example, can tell us much.

If there is no discharge from either nostril, we tend to think in terms of less inflammatory changes that may accompany allergies or irritations from dust or chemicals. Other symptoms can also be helpful in determining the cause: loss of appetite, weight loss, seasonal occurrences.

We may wish to do some other tests to help determine the cause: blood tests, X-rays of the head, endoscopic exam of the nasal passages. The history, symptoms, and the response to treatment will help decide if any of these extra tests are indicated.

How Can We Treat It?

Naturally the treatment will vary according to the cause and the resulting degree of involvement. We treat as specifically as possible in each case. Some aspects of treatment may include:

- Antibiotics or antifungal agents may be indicated.
- Often the antihistamine Benadryl is helpful to reduce the local inflammation and decrease the tendency to sneeze.
- Nasal drops of decongestant may be indicated.
- Cortisones are helpful in some causes.
- For some conditions surgery may be the best option, such as abscessed teeth, polyps and tumors.

So the treatment is modified for the specific cause as well as possible. Sometimes the treatment is used as a diagnostic tool: Did the pet respond to the medicine? Did the condition return when the medicine was stopped? Did the condition continue but in a slightly different form while being medicated?

Call Us If...

- Your pet's sneezing, gagging, or reversed sneezing appears to be getting worse.
- A nasal discharge increases or is changing by becoming bloody or opaque (white or greenish).
- You notice any degradation in your pet's general health.
- You have trouble giving the prescribed medicine.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!