

How do I care for a horse with chronic nasal discharge?

Chronic nasal discharge can be a very frustrating clinical symptom for both horse and owner.

Chronic nasal discharge can be associated with a primary sinus infection, Guttural Pouch Infection, infected teeth, ethmoid hematomas, rhinitis (infection or inflammation of the nasal passages) and, on rare occasions, tumors affecting the upper respiratory tract.

Diagnostics may include a physical exam, dental exam, upper respiratory endoscopy, radiographs of the head and, when indicated, a CT scan or MRI of the head. During the physical exam the veterinarian may percuss the sinuses to determine if fluid is present.

The patency of the nasal passages also can be ascertained by placing your hands by both nostrils and assessing if the adequate airflow is present. If decreased airflow is present in both nostrils or asymmetrical airflow is noted, then there probably is an obstructive disorder causing the nasal discharge.

Upper airway endoscopy is used to aid in the visualization of the nasal passages (rhinoscopy), ethmoid turbinates, guttural pouches (similar to the human Eustachian tube), and communication of the sinuses to the nasal passage and the throat. Diagnostic imaging, which consists of skull radiographs,

MRI, or CT can be used to document sinus infections, tooth root infections, or a mass in the sinus cavity.

Treatment for chronic nasal discharge will be tailored to the diagnosis. With sinus infections, for example, *sometimes* systemic antibiotics are adequate for complete resolution. If complete resolution is not achieved with systemic antibiotics, the sinuses may have to be lavaged and infused with antibiotics to aid in its resolution.

With severe sinus infections associated with a mass, a surgical procedure will be needed to remove the mass and remove any abnormal tissue in the affected sinuses. Guttural pouch infections at times can be difficult to treat with systemic antimicrobials and require lavages and infusion with antimicrobials or at times antifungals.

Nasal discharge associated with an infected tooth may respond to systemic antimicrobials. If the use of the systemic antimicrobials does not resolve the tooth infection, then removal of the affected tooth or teeth may be necessary.

Ethmoid hematomas are a benign tissue growth involving the ethmoid turbinates that requires aggressive medical therapy (injection with formalin) or surgical intervention (surgical removal or laser ablation).



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