

LYMPHOCYtic PLASMACYtic STOMATITIS

What is it?

It is a common mouth disease of cats, which causes chronic irritation, and inflammation of the soft tissues of the mouth, specifically the gums, and the back of the throat. It can be a painful condition that may even cause your cat to stop eating. The cause is unknown but it is believed to be an immune-mediated over reaction to plaque. In other words, your cat becomes allergic to the thin layer of debris that sticks to its teeth and this causes sore gums and a very sore mouth.

What does it look like?

The clinical signs of Lymphocytic Plasmacytic Stomatitis (LPS) can vary between cats depending on the severity of the lesions. Cats with LPS may have some but not all of the following signs:

1. Inflammation of the area at the back of the throat where the lower and upper jaws meet (the fauces). This area becomes red, swollen, and ulcerated in what has been described as a “cobblestone” appearance.
2. Inflammation of the area where the tooth meets the gum line resulting in a bright red line along the gingiva. Often these cats have minimal or no calculus (commonly called tartar).
3. Difficulty eating due to a sore mouth. Cats with LPS may be hungry and pick up food but drop it before they chew it or will only prefer softer foods.
4. Excessive salivation/drooling.
5. Gums that bleed easily.
6. Bad breath/halitosis.
7. Reluctance to groom which can result in unkempt, lackluster fur and mats.
8. Weight loss.
9. Refusal to eat/anorexia.

Diagnosis

LPS may be initially diagnosed on the appearance of the tissues and the presence of one or more of the clinical signs mentioned above.

Diagnosis can be confirmed by biopsy of the inflamed tissues.

When LPS is suspected as a diagnosis, it is important to also test for any other underlying systemic diseases (which can affect multiple systems in the body) and treat them as these can cause flare-ups of LPS. Underlying conditions include FeLV/FIV, diabetes mellitus, and immune system disorders such as food allergies.

Dental radiographs can be beneficial in assessing the condition of the tooth roots and associated bones.

Certain highly bred breeds of cats are predisposed to developing LPS, which suggests a genetic component. These breeds include Siamese, Abyssinian, and Himalayans.

Treatment

Treatment requires getting your cat’s mouth plaque free and keeping it that way. This can be a frustrating endeavor as often the response to treatment wears off and further treatment is needed. This is a life-long condition.

Initially, a thorough dental cleaning under a general anesthetic is required. This will include extraction of any non-viable teeth, scaling, fluoride treatment, and polishing.

Follow-up home care with antibiotics for a short time after the dentistry and daily cleaning of remaining teeth is important to prevent relapses.

Some cats will have relapses that will respond to “pulse” treatment with antibiotics (ie: a 2-week course of oral antibiotics every few months).

Some cats do not respond to treatment and may require further dentistry to extract all of the teeth behind the canines (fangs). This sounds extreme, but it will result in a much happier cat with a pain free mouth. Once the post-extraction swelling goes down and the source of the irritation (the teeth) is removed most cats do very well. Many cats have had this done and will still happily eat hard, dry kibble even though they have no teeth.

Submitted by Dr. Nicole Guyett

References:

1. The CUSP article, Fraser Hale, dental vet extraordinaire, www.toothvet.ca
2. www.cat-world.com.au