

PND Hack and Gack

Every day, a dog will come in with a cough. My obligation is to figure out whether we are dealing with an upper airway or lower airway issue. Meaning, nose and throat or lungs. Sometimes it's both.

Quite often we can rule out issues with the lungs and heart fairly easy using signalment ideas like age, presence or absence of a heart murmur, or history of heart disease, but also from a careful exam of the nose and throat.

The sound of the cough also matters. When you rub the dogs throat, if it starts coughing that is a good sign because it is less likely to be a heart problem.

Eventually I can back into a diagnosis of postnasal hack in gag. It is the single most common causes of coughing in dogs in Cobb County. It is an extension of the fact that Cobb County has some of the worst quality air in the United States for most of the year. Fulton and DeKalb County are similar. See: johnsonvet.com/smog

So how does that relate to your dog's situation?

"PND hack and gag" refers to post nasal drip hack and gag. It is an inflammation in the sinus, throat, trachea and bronchi. As an inflammatory process it does not have its base in **germs**, so quite often, antibiotics are not indicated. Its primary issue is inflammation in the airway. So, many of these cases resolved with the application of certain anti-inflammatories.

In some cases anti-histamines are a good idea, and I like Allegra, Zyrtec, and Benadryl. Allegra is the sovereign antihistamine because you can give it once a day to get the same benefits as Benadryl three times a day.

Sometimes, a dog will have a flare up of postnasal drip hack and gag as a *singularity*. It does not necessarily represent a lifetime of sinus and trachea problems.

Two classic symptoms that go with post nasal drip pack and gag, are **breathing problems** manifested in the nose, often referred to as "**reverse sneeze**" sounds like dogs that seem to be trying to hack up hair in the back of the throat. It ends with a "gack" where you would expect to see some sort of barf, but the most you might get is a little spot of white foam. That is classic PND.

A dog that is licking its feet a lot, has a condition called Atopy. It's in the inflammatory response to elements in the environment, especially airway. See johnsonvet.com/atopy and johnsonvet.com/smog

If a dog has a cough, while it is also manifesting foot licking, it often turns out to be inflammation in the skin as well as the airway. Associated (linked) symptoms of Atopy.

To recap: Postnasal drip is diagnosed and manifested by:

- A cough that ends in a "gack"
- Attempts to gack up hair, which results in nothing or a little spot of foam
- A dog that is concurrently licking its feet
- When you rub its throat, it starts to cough
- A dog that does **not** have chest congestion or heart failure
- The dog will **not** have A fever

Management will involve an anti-inflammatory and probably an anti-histamine. In the absence of a fever we would reserve antibiotics to be used only if necessary, or the case fails to respond quickly. Cough suppressant's are rarely needed unless sleep is being disturbed. Humidity is helpful and soothing to the dog's airway. You can use a warm air humidifier in a confined space to create the kind of air humidity that actually helps. Additionally, as you may know, those of you who have postnasal drip, your throat can be sore. Dogs will not eat lozenges. But you can put a handful of ice on a towel in a bowl, and they will lick that ice which is soothing to the throat. You would be surprised how many dogs love to lick ice.

Postnasal drip is basically an allergy manifesting in the airway. Suppression of the cough is very important because repeated coughing can cause further irritation to vital structures in the larynx and throat, making situations worse.