

Discoid Lupus (DL)

Discoid Lupus, also known as “Collie Nose,” is an autoimmune disease. Autoimmune disease means that your dog’s own immune system begins attacking the healthy and normal cells of the body. The exact cause of this is not known.

Discoid Lupus is not contagious, and it is limited to the skin. The nose and face are the most commonly affected areas. Direct sunlight and higher altitudes increase the number of cases seen, and also contribute to the severity of this disease. The means that here in Colorado we see it more often than those living at lower altitudes.

This disease first begins as a loss of pigment (pale area) on the nose, and can progress to include crusts, scabs and sores. The disease is generally only found on the nose area, and dogs are usually healthy otherwise. In rare cases, the disease can affect other areas of the dog’s body, and in the worst cases become life threatening.

How do I know if my dog has DL?

A biopsy while your dog is sedated is necessary to get a definite diagnosis. If your veterinarian sees the usual clinical signs, and your dog responds to the medical treatment, DL is often presumed to be the cause. There are other potential causes of a sore on your dog’s nose, such as a bacterial infection, fungal infection, trauma or possibly even cancer.

What is the treatment for DL?

Treatment for DL varies from patient to patient. Treatment will depend on your dog’s tolerance for the treatment, the severity of the disease, and if the treatment seems to help the symptoms. Treatment is typically necessary for the rest of the dog’s life.

Limit exposure to the sun as much as possible. Keep the dog out of the sun at its highest intensity, typically from 10am to 4pm.

Medications

Tetracycline/Doxycycline (antibiotics) and Niacinimide (nutritional supplement) are usually tried first. These two medications are used together and given to the dog 3 times a day. If this produces good results, these medications may possibly be decreased in frequency.

In severe or non-responsive cases, dogs may be given a combination of steroids and/or other immunosuppressive medications.

Monitor your dog’s health. Examine your dog routinely for disease control, and for medication side effects. Regular laboratory testing should be done for potential medication side effects.