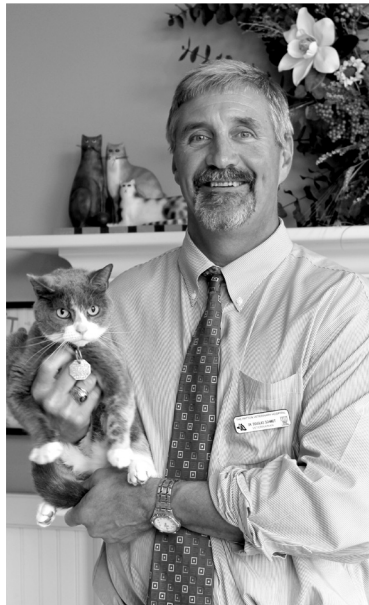


# ASK OUR VET, DR. SCHMIDT



## *What Is Collapsing Trachea?*

Many middle aged or older small breed dogs such as Maltese or Yorkshire Terriers develop a condition called collapsing trachea. Basically, the cartilage rings that hold the windpipe, or trachea, open, can start to deteriorate or flatten. This flattening of the rings narrows the dog's airway and causes a cough. The resulting dry cough is often described as sounding like a "goose honk" and is typically worse when the dog is excited, during exercise, or when the dog pulls on a neck collar causing pressure on the windpipe.

Diagnosis is typically made on history and clinical signs. The veterinarian can usually cause the dog to cough by palpating the neck, though failure to cough on exam does not rule out this condition. Occasionally, narrowing of the windpipe may be seen on x-ray, but, because it may be difficult to snap a picture at the exact time the airway narrows, x-ray may look normal. Definitive diagnosis is by a type of moving x-ray video known as fluoroscopy at a veterinary referral center. Treatment of tracheal collapse may involve limiting stress and avoiding the pet becoming overheated, using a chest harness instead of a collar to prevent pressure on the windpipe,

various cough suppressants and, sometimes, mild sedatives for stressful events. Drugs known as bronchodilators may also be used to help open the airways. There are some surgical options for severe cases or cases that no longer respond to medical management; however, the complication rate and cost of treatment can be high. While some serious cases can be life-threatening, most cases of tracheal collapse can be managed with a combination of medications and reduction of stress or excitement where possible.



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