

Cat's condition could be a bacterial or viral infection

I have a 10-year-old female Siamese cat. She sneezes, her eyes are irritated, and she has nasal discharge. Eye drops help with the eyes temporarily. I have contacted several vets, and they don't offer any solutions.

Upper-respiratory problems are extremely common in cats, and one must rule out chronic bacterial infections and immune-system-impairing viral infections like feline AIDS. A wholesome diet is essential. Give your cat up to a teaspoon of fish oil daily, like Nordic Naturals, and wean her on to a quality cat food like Natura's Evo, PetGuard or Wellness. Other brands, including raw frozen, are listed at my website. Under veterinary supervision, explore aromatherapy inhalant hydrosols, such as those available from AromaDog (www.aromadog.com), and super-antioxidant supplements like quercetin and L-Alpha-lipoic acid coenzyme Q10.

Many cats with this condition have made dramatic recoveries when all artificial-scented products/fragrances are removed from the home environment. One of the safest home cleaners and air fresheners that I know of is Orange TKO.

Dear Dr. Fox - I just read in one of your columns about a Rhodesian Ridgeback/pit-bull cross that had become increasingly fearful, yelping at noises, etc. I had this happen with a rescued Staffordshire bull terrier who had been abused. He had two related problems: He became blind in one eye, and movement or noises startled him when he couldn't see; he also had apparent syringomyelia that caused intermittent pain to his head and neck area. I say apparent because his brother and father were both confirmed to have this condition. While he didn't air scratch, he would suddenly scream while playing or walking. This pain, paired with having been previously hit by a car, made him fearful. You could also see him trying to make associations between his environment and his sudden attack of pain.

The dog in your column was also a Ridgeback/pit-bull cross. Both Ridgebacks and boxers have problems with dermoid sinus. This can occur on the neck and back of the head, as well as the spine. It can cause severe pain.

Dermoid sinus (where there is a hole in the back or neck and a tiny tube leading down to the spinal cord) is a serious problem in certain breeds. There may be more than one sinus, and these defects do indeed cause pain and neurological problems.

Fortunately, this condition can be corrected surgically. All affected dogs should be neutered to help eliminate this genetic defect from the breed. It is most prevalent in Ridgebacks and bull terriers.

This condition can also be evident in other breeds and crosses. Any sudden change in temperament and fear/pain when touched on the back could mean there is a dermoid-sinus problem under the fur.

www.twobitdog.com/DrFox

Dr. Fox, c/o "Animal Doctor," United Features Syndicate, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

About the Author

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