

## Laryngeal Paralysis

Laryngeal paralysis is a relatively common problem in dogs. It is particularly common in older Labrador and Golden Retrievers but can be seen in any breed. To this date, we don't have a full understanding as to why dogs develop this condition but we do know that it results from a dysfunction of the recurrent laryngeal nerve...an important nerve that innervates the larynx. Normally, this nerve stimulates the larynx to open when we breathe and close when we swallow food and water. Dogs with laryngeal paralysis have a dysfunction of this nerve. Recent studies show that laryngeal paralysis may be part of a polyneuropathy, a condition where multiple nerves are affected in the body. At this point, we don't know what causes the nerves to be abnormal to begin with.

Dogs with laryngeal paralysis will often have a voice change. They may lose or develop a funny sound to their bark. They often have difficulty breathing, particularly with heat and exercise. In severe cases of laryngeal paralysis dogs may become cyanotic (where their tongue turns blue) meaning that they are not getting enough oxygen. Dogs may also have problems with heat exhaustion because they are working so hard to breathe. If left untreated, both of these scenarios can be life threatening.

Dogs that are having a difficult time with laryngeal paralysis can be helped with surgery. An arytenoid lateralization, or "tie-back" procedure can be performed which gives dogs a larger opening to breathe through. This procedure often prevents dogs from getting into a respiratory crisis. Because of the larger opening in the larynx, the biggest risk of laryngeal paralysis surgery is aspiration of food and/or water resulting in pneumonia. This complication occurs on an average of 1 out of every 5 dogs having the surgery. Most of the time the pneumonia is treatable but can be life threatening if severe. Most of the dogs having surgery for laryngeal paralysis will quite well. Usually the improved breathing results in more energy and overall relief.

The WestVet surgeons frequently perform the laryngeal tie back procedure to help dogs that are having a difficult time with breathing. If you think that your dog may have laryngeal paralysis, consult your family veterinarian. Consultation with a WestVet surgeon requires a referral from your family veterinarian. Dogs with laryngeal paralysis should be kept in a cool, calm environment to avoid a respiratory or over-heating crisis.