

Dog's Gums or Tongue Look Odd

The causes and treatments of a dog's blue, dry, or pale gums or tongue.

CAUSES OF BLUE GUMS OR TONGUE

Breed of dog: Chow Chows normally have blue-black tongues.

Infectious diseases: Pneumonia due to distemper; parainfluenza; adenovirus-1 or adenovirus-2 infection; secondary bacterial infections; coccidioidomycosis (fungal infection); or aspiration (due to vomiting, cleft palate, improperly administered oral medication or force-feeding, megaesophagus, enlargement/dysfunction of the esophagus).

Trauma: To the thorax (penetrating wounds, diaphragmatic hernia, tension pneumothorax, fractured ribs, lung injury), trachea, or larynx.

Non-infectious/Acquired disease: Heart disease (mitral valve disease, cardiomyopathy).

Allergic reactions: Pneumonitis/ pulmonary hypersensitivity (due to bacteria, fungi, heartworms) or anaphylaxis.

Foreign bodies: In nasal passages, larynx, trachea, or foreign material causing bronchial obstruction.

Miscellaneous disorders: Gastric dilatation/volvulus or pulmonary thrombosis (secondary to trauma or surgery).

Irritation/Inflammation: Inhalation of smoke or irritant vapors.

Toxicity: Strychnine or ANTU, both rodenticides.

Tumors: In larynx, trachea, lungs, or heart.

Parasites/Parasite-borne diseases: Heartworms or tick paralysis.

Immune disorders: Pulmonary thrombosis (secondary to immune-mediated hemolytic anemia).

What to do: Blue gums or tongue may or may not be an emergency, depending on the cause and other signs of illness. Contact your veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately for specific advice about your dog's situation. CAUSES OF DRY GUMS OR TONGUE

Environmental: Off-flavored or stale water.

Behavioral: Stress due to travel, moving, etc.

Infectious disease: Parvovirus; gastroenteritis with vomiting and/or diarrhea; distemper, leptospirosis, rabies, and other diseases that cause generalized depression, along with meningitis and/or encephalitis with subsequent pharyngeal dysfunction/paralysis; prostatitis, prostatic abscess; peritonitis due to rupture of a diseased organ (intestine, uterus) or abscess (prostate, liver); or post-surgical infection. Note: Never handle a dog who may have rabies. If possible, without touching the dog, confine him in a room, pen, or yard and call your local animal control for assistance.

Trauma: To the skull (brain), mouth, teeth, tongue, pharynx, or abdomen, burns, snake bite, or massive trauma of any type.

Foreign bodies: In the mouth, pharynx, stomach, or intestines.

Tumors: In the brain, nasal passages (with extension into brain), pharynx, pancreas, or other sites (especially widespread cancer).

Toxicity: Ethanol (alcohol), ethylene glycol, anticoagulant rodenticides (warfarin), metaldehyde (slug bait), lead, grapes, or raisins.

Parasites/Parasite-borne diseases: Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, coccidiosis (in puppies), salmon poisoning disease (a bacterial disease contracted by eating salmon, trout or Pacific giant salamanders parasitized by flukes)

that carry the infective organism)

Miscellaneous disorders: Pancreatitis or heat stroke.

Endocrine disorders: Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison's disease) or pyometra (uterine infection).

Non-infectious/Acquired disease: Chronic kidney disease, liver failure, or urethral obstruction.

Nutritional disorder: Malnutrition or malabsorption syndromes.

What to do: Dry gums or tongue may or may not be an emergency, depending on the cause and other signs of illness. Contact your veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately for specific advice about your dog's situation. CAUSES OF PALE GUMS OR TONGUE

Parasites/Parasite-borne diseases: Hookworms (especially in puppies), fleas, heartworms, ehrlichiosis.

Trauma: At any location, with hemorrhage.

Toxicity: Anticoagulant rodenticides (warfarin), lead.

Non-infectious/Acquired disease: Chronic kidney disease.

Tumors: In the liver, stomach, intestines, pancreas, or spleen.

Endocrine disorders: Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison's disease) or hypothyroidism.

Immune-mediated disorders: Primary immune-mediated hemolytic anemia or systemic lupus erythematosus.

Congenital/Inherited disorders: Portosystemic shunt or chronic hepatitis (in Bedlington Terriers).

Infectious diseases: Histoplasmosis or salmon poisoning disease.

Drug reactions: Vaccine-induced thrombocytopenia (platelet deficiency) or drug-induced thrombocytopenia.

Miscellaneous: Gastric dilatation/volvulus.

What to do: Pale gums or tongue may or may not be an emergency, depending on the cause and other signs of illness. Contact your veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately for specific advice about your dog's situation.

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