

Options to Surgery for Puppy's Pneumonia

Analysis of puppy's lung fluid should be next step.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have a 3-month-old puppy. Two weeks after getting her, she developed pneumonia. She had an IV and antibiotics. She was released after three day. Although still on oral antibiotics, she doesn't seem much better. The vet said if she doesn't improve, she will need part of her lung removed. She is now deaf although I don't know if this is related to her illness. What alternatives are there for her? I do not want to remove part of her lung.

A. I agree that removing part of your dog's lung sounds a little excessive for pneumonia that is not improving. There are several other options to consider first:

1. The antibiotics are not effective against the organism.

To determine which antibiotic is effective, a procedure known as a transtracheal wash is performed, where fluid is obtained from the airways in the lungs, then cultured and identified. Once the organism is identified, it is tested against different antibiotics to see which ones are effective.

Less ideal would be simply to change to a different, more powerful antibiotic.

2. Your dog has canine influenza.

Canine influenza is a highly contagious viral infection that can lead to pneumonia and can be very challenging to treat. Most dogs need to remain in the hospital for 3 to 5 days, getting intravenous fluids, nebulization (steam), coupage (pounding on the chest to loosen up secretions), intravenous antibiotics (for any secondary bacterial infections), and nutritional support.

Ask your vet about these options before agreeing to surgery, or get a second opinion.