

Feline nasopharyngeal or aural polyps

Animal Surgical Care of Michigan

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Overview: Nasopharyngeal or aural polyps are masses that develop in the back of the throat or inner ear in cats. They are thought to develop due to chronic irritation/inflammation of the lining of the middle ear or eustachian tube.

Signs/symptoms: If located in the throat, the cat may sneeze or have nasal discharge. There may be a voice change, gagging, or trouble breathing. When located in the ear, the cat will often have signs related to an ear infection like scratching the ear or shaking the head. Occasionally, the cat will present with a head tilt.

Diagnosis: Aural (ear) polyps are diagnosed by physical examination or examination with an otoscope. Nasopharyngeal polyps are diagnosed by examination, often dorsal to (above) the soft palate, with the cat under anesthesia. Occasionally additional tests like radiographs or a CT scan may be indicated.

Treatment: Polyps can be removed by steady, gentle traction on the mass. Unfortunately, with this method approximately 50% of masses will recur. When this happens, a more aggressive surgery is recommended called a ventral bulla osteotomy. This surgery involves going into the bulla (bony structure around the middle ear) and removing the base of the polyp.

Aftercare/outcome: Prognosis is good following ventral bulla osteotomy (VBO). Following VBO, a large percentage of cats will develop a Horner's syndrome, which is evident to the owner because the third eyelid is up over a portion of the eye. This is usually temporary and will resolve with time. Some cats will also develop problems with balance that may include a head tilt or wobbly walking. These are also often temporary but can be permanent.

Please refer to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons website

www.acvs.org for additional information or call Dr. Boswell at 269-312-4227