Drooling

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Drooling is common in cats and may be caused by many different conditions. The medical term for excessive production of saliva is 'pytalism.' Drooling may also be called 'hypersalivation.'

What causes drooling in cats?

Drooling may be caused by an overproduction of saliva or a reluctance or inability to swallow. Drooling in cats may be associated with the following:

- Dental disease such as gingivitis, stomatiis, or periodontal disease
- Other diseases of the mouth such as oral ulcers, cancer, or a foreign body in the mouth
- Nausea or pain associated with gastrointestinal disease or pancreatitis
- Motion sickness
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease
- Salivary gland disease
- Heatstroke (hyperthermia)
- Receiving medications with a bitter taste
- Ingestion of something caustic
- Certain pesticides such as organophosphates or permethrin
- Ingestion of certain insects or toads
- Inability to swallow caused by rabies, tetanus, other neuromuscular disease (eg., facial nerve paralysis, certain types of epilepsy), foreign body in the esophagus, or other condition
- Other esophageal diseases
- Some cats may drool while they are kneading, perhaps as a sign of contentment

If rabies is a possible cause of drooling, always wear protective gloves and seek medical attention for your cat immediately

How is the cause of drooling determined?

A complete history, oral exam and physical exam are necessary in determining the cause of drooling in cats. A thorough oral exam may require sedation or general anesthesia. A chemistry panel and CBC would be performed if liver or kidney disease is suspected. Radiographs (x-rays), a barium study, ultrasound, or endoscopy may be indicated in some cases.

How is drooling treated?

Treatments for drooling in cats will differ significantly based upon the cause of the drooling, that is why the proper diagnosis is so important. If your cat is drooling for some reason other than when he is kneading, have him examined by your veterinarian.

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