Collie Nose (Nasal Solar Dermatitis)

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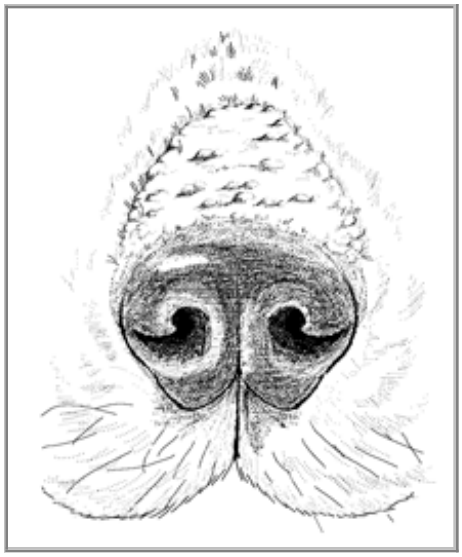
'Collie nose' is used to describe a condition in which breeds with little or no pigment on their face develop lesions, usually on the nose, eyelids, and lips. The lesions are caused by a hypersensitivity to sunlight. Despite the term 'Collie nose,' breeds other than Collies can also be affected, especially Shetland Sheepdogs. Collie nose has an inherited component and is worse in areas with sunny climates.

What are the symptoms?



Usually the lesions appear as pink, raw areas about the nose and occasionally on the eyelids. The hypersensitive areas may actually ulcerate and develop a crusty scab-like covering. The condition may vary from mild irritation to severe ulcerating lesions that hemorrhage.

What are the risks?

Left untreated, severe discomfort can result. As the nasal tissues become deeply irritated, they may crack, bleed, and impair breathing. All cases should begin treatment in the early stages. Advanced stages may develop into a form of cancer, which can be deadly.

What is the management?

Before treatment can begin, this condition must be differentiated from various autoimmune disorders such as lupus erythematosus or skin cancer, which may cause similar lesions. Biopsies are usually warranted to help confirm the diagnosis.

Collie nose can be managed several ways. Exposure to sunlight should be kept to a minimum. Sunscreen lotions help, but have limited effectiveness due to a dog's licking behavior. In some cases, the treatment of choice is tattooing. A permanent black ink is tattooed into the affected areas. The black ink serves as a shield against sunlight. It is best if young dogs with lightly pigmented noses, as a preventive, are tattooed before any lesions develop.

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