

CHRONIC GINGIVITIS STOMATITIS COMPLEX

CHRONIC GINGIVITIS STOMATITIS COMPLEX (CGSC) IS A CONDITION ASSOCIATED WITH INFLAMMATION OF THE GUMS (GINGIVITIS) AND THE TISSUES IN THE ORAL CAVITY OR MOUTH (STOMATITIS).

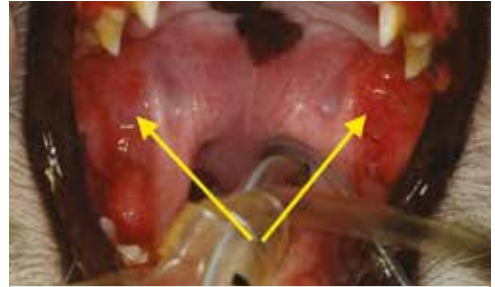
Gum or gingival inflammation is a normal response to the presence of plaque, the bacterial soft sticky film that forms on the surface of the crowns of the teeth. Antibodies (from the blood and made by your pet's immune system) move into the space between the tooth and the gum (called the gingival sulcus).

Here the antibodies bind to bacteria and act to control bacterial numbers, together with white blood cells that also arrive from the blood. This results in gum inflammation.



Severe and inappropriate inflammation (arrowed) associated with reaction to plaque.

Although gum inflammation is a normal response to plaque on the tooth, it should not be marked or significant. In some cats the gum inflammation is excessive because their immune system responds aggressively and inappropriately to the presence of plaque.



Inflammation of back of mouth (arrowed) making swallowing extremely painful.

In these cats, enormous numbers of white blood cells invade into the gums and soft tissues covering the inside of the cheeks, the back of the throat and potentially the tongue and roof of the mouth.

Pain and discomfort

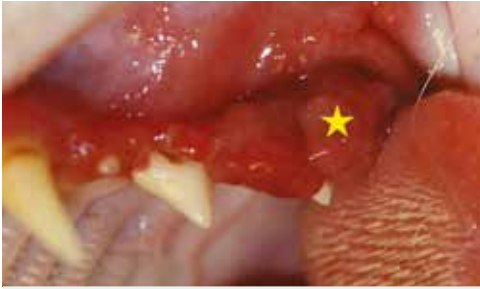
This severe inflammation causes the oral tissues to become fragile, ulcerated and extremely sensitive. Without management the disease often progresses and is very debilitating, preventing cats from eating normally, grooming, and leaving them in a lot of pain. As yet, it is not clear what the exact trigger for the excessive and inappropriate inflammatory immune response is. There are likely to be a number of causes, including plaque and feline calicivirus.

The link with calicivirus

Calicivirus is one of the cat flu viruses; although many cats are infected with calicivirus, most do not develop gingivitis stomatitis. Many other factors are likely to be associated with the development of the disease, including genetic factors.

Treatment

All current treatments for gingivitis stomatitis aim to reduce plaque levels in the oral cavity, thereby decreasing the inappropriate inflammatory response. The most commonly used technique for plaque management, daily tooth brushing, is often impossible for many cat owners and is therefore not a practical long term management solution.



Gum proliferation, with excess tissue, and ulceration (starred) in a cat with severe gingivitis stomatitis complex.

Plaque accumulates mostly on tooth surfaces and therefore tooth extraction, often extraction of all teeth, is the treatment of choice. No other treatment has been shown to permanently resolve gingivitis stomatitis complex. Surgical tooth extractions must be performed with the utmost care, minimising the trauma and ensuring all of the teeth are completely removed.

Medical treatment may include anti-inflammatory drugs, pain relief, antibiotics and drugs that regulate the immune system. Anti-stress medications and essential fatty acid supplements have also been proposed as possible additional therapies.

How cats respond

Cats adapt extraordinarily well to the extraction of most or all of their teeth. Most cats will continue to eat dry foods happily and the majority will be a lot more comfortable in the medium to long term after extractions.

How long will it take?

The response to treatment may take anything from a few weeks to several months. Response is poor in a proportion of cases (around 1 in 5 cats), and these cats may require ongoing medical treatment to keep them comfortable. The good news is, in most cases this medical treatment is successful.