

## Nail Problems Page 1

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Nail infections, sloughing and misshapen nails are common problems we see at MVSC. There are many different reasons for these nail issues. Our specialist dermatologists are experienced in performing biopsies of nails that eliminate the need for digit amputation. This technique is very specialized and enables a correct diagnosis and accurate treatment. In many cases nail problems are able to be completely resolved or at least well controlled.

### **Canine Lupoid Onychodystrophy**

Canine lupoid onychodystrophy is a nail disease which targets the part of the skin where the nail grows from. There may be several causes including autoimmune disease (where the immune system attacks their own tissues), bacterial infection, food allergy or vasculitis (inflammation of the blood vessels of the nail bed) or certain types of trauma. In our clinic it is most commonly seen in:

- German Shepherds
- Labradors
- Rhodesian Ridgebacks
- Poodles
- Cocker Spaniels

### **What does canine lupoid onychodystrophy look like?**

It usually presents as a sudden onset disease with one or more nails being affected on multiple feet at the same time. The nails will often be painful and separate from the underlying toe and cause bleeding and sloughing. They may come off completely exposing the “quick” underneath or may remain loosely attached and create significant pain. A pussy discharge may also be seen around the base of the nail. Milder cases or some partly recovered long term cases will often have short, distorted nails that split easily.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Diagnosis requires a combination of a detailed history, clinical appearance, cytological findings (microscopy) and histopathology (biopsy of the nail bed). Taking a diagnostic biopsy without having to amputate part of the toe is not easy to do and is best done by a specialist veterinary dermatologist. The major benefit of this technique is that we get rapid responses and it avoids amputation. In amputation techniques the bone must be decalcified before the tissue can be processed and this can delay diagnosis and treatment for up to 3 weeks. Amputation is not only disfiguring but it changes the conformation of the paw and can lead to other secondary changes to the paw pads and skin around it.

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### **What should you do if your dog has lupoid onychodystrophy?**

Sudden onset disease requires a quick and accurate diagnosis and immediate treatment in order to prevent permanent damage to the nail bed and permanent deformity and loss of function to the nails. Consult your local vet to arrange referral to a veterinary dermatologist immediately.

### **How is it lupoid onychodystrophy treated?**

Treatment options will depend on the diagnosis, type and degree of inflammation seen on the nail bed biopsy. This may require aggressive treatment to slow down the immune cells attacking the nail bed. Although some dogs may require long term therapy, in our experience aggressive EARLY diagnosis and treatment can result in a cure. Permanent surgical removal of the nails may be an option as a salvage treatment where medical treatment fails and the nails are painful. Early treatment may avoid this option and we have never had to recommend this end stage treatment in our practice.