

CLAIM OF THE MONTH

FELINE ASTHMA

Pet: Max, a 7- to 10-year-old domestic shorthair cat



MAX'S STORY

This case represents a chronic illness, where veterinary care can occur in multiple episodes over several years, or even a lifetime. Max* the cat is an excellent example of one of these cases.

Max was a mature cat about to enter his senior years when his family started to notice some health changes. He appeared to be working harder to breathe even when he was resting. He developed a bit of a wheeze, so his family could see and hear that he was taking longer to push his breath out before drawing it back in again.

With this change, his normally robust appetite and energy level began to slowly decline. Most alarmingly, he started to have spells of panting when he became excited or stressed.

Open-mouthed breathing and appetite loss are always a concern in cats, so Max's veterinary team ran a few tests. They took x-rays to evaluate his heart and lungs, scoped his bronchi and collected some fluid samples from the lungs. They looked for infection with bacteria or viruses and evaluated his overall organ function.

His bloodwork showed some generalized inflammation, but his chest x-rays were the most revealing. There was enlargement of Max's lung field and visible inflammation throughout the air tracts of his lungs: signs consistent with asthma.

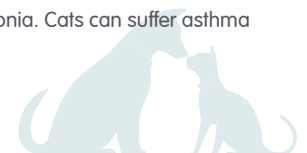
ABOUT THE CONDITION: FELINE ASTHMA

Feline asthma (or feline bronchial asthma) is a condition in which the immune system overreacts to minor contaminants, particulates and pathogens in the airways of the lungs. Things like dust, smoke or harmless bacteria wouldn't bother a healthy cat, but they can cause serious inflammation in the air passages of a cat with asthma. That means swelling of the airways, spasm, constriction and excess mucus production.

The lungs are composed of many tiny tubes for air flow and when they become swollen and filled with mucus, it becomes extremely hard for the cat to move air in and out, impairing the ability to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Cats with asthma may develop a chronic cough, a wheeze or raspy breathing. Because breathing becomes hard work, an affected cat's energy and appetite levels often decrease.

Over time, asthma can cause scar formation in the lungs that predisposes to the development of infections and pneumonia. Cats can suffer asthma attacks (episodes of distressed and laboured breathing) that can lead to collapse and even death.



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TREATMENT

Asthma is a chronic illness that can't be definitively cured. Pet owners can manage their cat's asthma using a combination of oral and inhaled steroids and medication that helps the airways dilate to allow more air flow. In emergency situations, asthma patients may require sedatives and oxygen therapy. While antibiotic medications may be required to manage secondary lung infections.

A cat diagnosed with asthma needs careful management of its environment. Smoke, dust and other lung contaminants need to be reduced as much as possible. Stress or excitement also needs to be avoided if the disease is not well controlled.

CLAIM OUTCOME

Max lived for more than three years after his asthma diagnosis. In this time, he needed more than \$13,000** in veterinary care to manage his illness.

Pets Plus Us reimbursed his family for over \$10,300 of those fees through the Accident and Illness policy.

*Name was changed for privacy

**Source: 2022 PTZ Insurance claims data. Value of claims in \$ CAD.

