Symmetrical Lupoid Onychodystrophy
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Symmetrical lupoid onychodystrophy (SLO) is an autoimmune disease characterized by nails that become inflamed at the base and eventually fall off. The condition can be extremely painful.

SLO typically starts with one nail being affected. All of the nails eventually become affected within the ensuing 1 to 3 weeks. The nail plate lifts away from the quick with an appearance that often looks like an open hood on a car. The quick tends to bleed and may become infected with *Staphylococcus, E. coli* or *Pseudomonas.*

Differential diagnoses include: nail trauma or nail bed neoplasia; however, these diseases only affect one or two nails. The characteristic of multiple nails falling off is pathognomonic for SLO.

The most important factor in the treatment of SLO is to control pain. NSAIDs and tramadol combined are typically effective. Dogs must have a reduced activity level until the disease is controlled so that nails are not inadvertently traumatized further.

The second factor that must be addressed with SLO is treating and preventing infection. Cytology must be performed of the affected quicks to determine if infection is present or not. If the nails are infected, then systemic antibiotic is typically required for 3 or 4 weeks. Topical ear medication that contain betamethasone and gentamicin can be applied to infected quicks 2 to 3 times per day to speed healing.

If no infection is present, then efforts should be focused on preventing infection. Daily chlorhexidine or soapy water paw soaks can help prevent infection while the nails are healing.

The final factor that must be addressed is the underlying disease itself. SLO is a condition that is controlled, but not cured. It requires continuous treatment to prevent relapses. Therapies that tend to be most effective for SLO include: Atopica® or doxycycline and niacinamide.

Atopica® is a therapy that is safe for long-term use, administered once daily (and can sometimes be reduced to every other day dosing), and takes 3 to 6 weeks to take effect. It can cause gastrointestinal upset in some patients. These signs can be ameliorated by administering the Atopica® as a frozen capsule and also by giving it with food.
Doxycycline/niacinamide is a therapy that is also safe for long-term use; although, rarely hepatotoxicity can occur. Some dogs experience gastrointestinal upset. Doxycycline is dosed at 5-10mg/kg by mouth twice daily and niacinamide is dosed at 500mg by mouth twice daily for medium and large dogs. Niacinamide is given as a half dose twice daily for small dogs. This therapy may take up to 12 weeks to reach maximum effect. Blood work should be monitored.

Omega 3 fatty acids (180mg/10lb body weight) given daily with food per day is a helpful adjunctive therapy.

Once SLO is controlled, flare-ups of the disease are uncommon. Medications should be reduced to the lowest dose that prevents the quicks from becoming inflamed.

Dogs affected with SLO typically never have normal nails after the initial insult. The nails tend to re-grow in unusual shapes (sometimes pointing upwards) and are often brittle.