

## BASIC INFORMATION

### Description

This condition arises when functional residual ovarian tissue is left in the abdomen following an ovariectomy (OHE, OVH, “spay”) or ovariectomy (OVE). Because the ovaries secrete estrogen, signs related to the continued production of estrogen can be observed in what was otherwise thought to be a sterilized animal.

### Causes

Inappropriate surgical technique is the usual cause of this syndrome. Accessory ovarian tissue in an abnormal location has never been reported in the dog and only rarely in the cat. Usually the ovarian remnant is located on the right side, because the right ovary is more difficult to visualize and isolate during the sterilization procedure.

### Clinical Signs

Most dogs and cats with retained ovarian tissue have signs that are similar to being in heat. The signs can arise soon after the “spay” or can be delayed, in some cases for years. A “false pregnancy” may also be seen and is more common in the dog than in the cat.

### Diagnostic Tests

The easiest way to confirm the problem is to look at cells taken from a vaginal swab. The vaginal cells undergo changes that are a direct result of estrogen’s influence.

A more sophisticated way to confirm that an ovarian remnant is still in the abdomen is to run hormone analyses. Measurement of

estrogen compounds can be helpful, but the test is not always reliable. Measurement of progesterone levels is much more useful.

Lastly, confirmation can be made during an exploratory laparotomy (abdominal surgery to search for possible retained ovarian tissue).

## TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

### Treatment Options

Surgery to remove the ovarian remnant tissue is the treatment of choice. It is usually done when the animal shows signs of being in heat, because the ovarian tissue is easier to identify during that time. The tissue removed is usually submitted for pathologic analysis to confirm that the tissue is actually ovarian in origin and not an estrogen-secreting tumor.

### Follow-up Care

Clinical signs usually resolve within days after surgery. If the animal continues to demonstrate signs of heat at a later date, then remnant tissue probably still remains. Absence of signs confirms successful treatment of the problem. Postoperative care is similar to that recommended after a routine spay surgery.

### Prognosis

Prognosis is good if the ovarian remnant is successfully removed. In some cases, these remnants are not easy to find, and recurrence of signs is possible if ovarian tissue is left in the abdomen.