

For common toy breed dog windpipe issue, veterinarians use technology and precision

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Carol Reiner, associate professor of small animal internal medicine in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, performs a tracheal stent procedure in small dogs that have severe tracheal collapse. Credit: MU News Bureau

Jack, a 12-year-old Yorkshire terrier, was lethargic and gasping for air when he arrived at the University of Missouri Veterinary Hospital. His tongue and gums were a bluish-purple. But, just one day following an innovative procedure, Jack bounced back to his former youthful exuberance.

Jack was suffering from tracheal collapse. Tracheal collapse occurs when the [cartilage](#) comprising the c-shaped rings of the [trachea](#) collapse, leaving dogs to breathe through a trachea that resembles a narrowed or closed straw. Standard treatment involves medical management with [lifestyle changes](#) and drugs aimed at minimizing the consequences of a smaller airway. For many dogs, medical management ultimately ceases to work.

In Jack's case, MU [veterinarians](#) inserted an intra-luminal stent, like a tiny spring, within the trachea. Carol Reiner, associate professor of small animal internal medicine, performed the procedure on Jack, which required no [incision](#).

"This condition is very common in toy breeds, but not all dogs with this condition have such severe symptoms," Reiner said. "We start with medical management, but because this is a [degenerative disease](#), further measures are sometimes necessary. The procedure that Jack received is generally considered a last-ditch effort. It takes a great deal of planning and precision. But its success can be seen – and heard – almost immediately."

The life-giving treatment Jack received was performed at the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, the only facility in Missouri known to offer the particular procedure that allowed Jack to breathe again so quickly. The MU College of Veterinary Medicine's success in the placement of these [stents](#) can be attributed to the teaching hospital's high-tech equipment and a full team of skilled veterinary medicine specialists, including board certified internists, anesthesiologists, radiologists and veterinary students.

"When Jack first came to us, he was wheezing and coughing, and we had to carry him around because of his condition," said Heather Wise, a fourth-year veterinary medical student. "At his follow up, we didn't even

hear him coming down the hall for his appointment."

Jack's two-week follow-up examination showed remarkable results. The team found that his oral membranes had returned to a healthy pink color and his tracheal and lung sounds were normal. The radiographs show the tracheal areas once absent of air are now propped fully open with the stent.

"We didn't realize how serious his condition was, but it was a great relief to know that it could be treated," said Connie Miller, Jack's owner. "He can now run around in the yard. This means everything to me. Jack is my little friend. This hospital is the only hospital that does this. Here we get the best of the best."

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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