

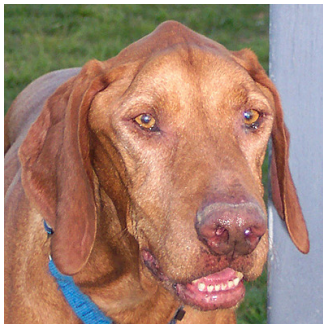


## Headlines ...

With the recent diagnosis of polymyositis in an Australian Hungarian Vizsla, several people have asked if this is like the head problems that have been seen in the breed in the past. Despite the similarities in appearance, the various head problems that have been described in Hungarian Vizslas have quite different presentations, and different needs and different responses to treatment. 'Affected head' is a non-progressive condition occurring at any age of life through an unknown process. Masticatory muscle myositis is an immune-mediated inflammatory myopathy that responds to treatment. The polymyositis that has recently been described in UK, North American and now Australian Hungarian Vizslas is an inflammatory myopathy that appears to be immune-mediated and which for a number of dogs, is a progressive disease.



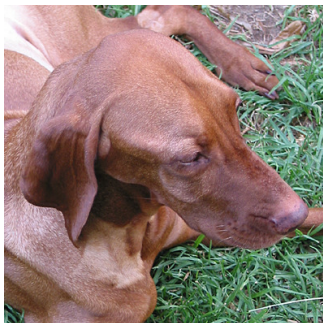
From all accounts, '**affected head**' (or 'head deformity' or 'cranial muscle atrophy') is a non-progressive condition, that is cosmetic in its nature. The name describes what is seen; dogs have wasted looking muscles of the head, but no or few other problems. They don't need veterinary treatment. The Vizsla Club of America prohibits breeding from dogs with 'cranial muscular atrophy'. This is not a term found in veterinary textbooks. The term 'cranial muscle atrophy' may be confusing because in some dogs the condition is evident from a few weeks of age, and therefore is not unequivocally a wasting of muscles that had normally developed. In other dogs it appears that the same condition occurs in middle to late age. It was proposed that this condition is inherited in a recessive manner. Several dogs with this condition were seen in the early days of the breed in Australia; it is not commonly seen now. (pictured: *Jordan*)



The disease of muscle wasting that has been diagnosed previously in Australia is **masticatory muscle myositis** (MMM) (also called atrophic myositis). This is an immune-mediated condition and affects the muscles of chewing (the masticatory muscles). These muscles have a different embryologic origin and because of this they contain a different type of muscle fibre than other muscles of the body. In this disease antibodies act against these special muscle fibres, and the other muscles of the dog are not usually affected. Affected dogs may drool and have swelling of the muscles. Although pain or inability to open the mouth is said to be a sign of this disease, most Vizslas that we are aware of, do not have this problem. Dogs suffering from this require veterinary treatment and they get better. The degree of muscle loss depends on how much damage occurs before dogs respond to treatment. This condition has been the most common disorder affecting head muscles that has been reported to the Club in recent years (average 1 case every couple of years). (pictured: *Geordie*)



The **polymyositis** (PM) that has recently been described is different again, and all documented cases have required extensive veterinary support. Like MMM above, it is an immune-mediated disease (there can be other causes of PM but these have been ruled out) but sadly, PM has been a progressive disease for a number of dogs - that is, even with comprehensive veterinary treatment their condition deteriorates and they die as a result of the disease. Affected dogs have difficulty swallowing both food and water, and have a loss of muscles of the head. Dogs may also be very tired, drool excessively, or have difficulty opening their mouths. Dogs with PM have very high levels of muscle enzymes measured in their blood as a result of muscle breakdown. They may also have megaesophagus. Neither the severity of the condition nor the progression were described as occurring in dogs with muscle wasting of their heads in Australia all those years ago, nor in MMM that has been diagnosed on muscle biopsy in more recent cases.



To further illustrate the similarities in appearance that can occur, this Vizsla doesn't have any of the above conditions that may affect the muscles of your dog's head. This dog was simply very ill and was on a drip for a week. As the dog regained health and weight, the head muscles returned to normal appearance.

**If your dog has any of these muscle-wasting conditions (affected head, MMM or PM),** we would like to know about your dog so that we have a better understanding of how common these conditions are in our breed.

Research in the UK that is being conducted into polymyositis is now collecting DNA from affected dogs and from their nearest relatives – their parents and litter mates. The HVCNSW is supporting and assisting in this work. (pictured: *Tessi*)

**For further information:** see our FAQ sheet: Polymyositis in the Hungarian Vizsla – some FAQs

Image 3 from <http://vetneuromuscular.ucsd.edu/cases/2007/Sept07.html> all others owner submitted. Thanks to our members for their support ☺

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<http://www.vizsla.org.au>