

Dogs & Their Noses

Canine noses are much more talented than human noses. Canine noses are beneficial for many reasons. Their noses can find bodies, dead or alive, by following the scents of shed skin flakes, sweat droplets and scent mists for as long as 105 hours and as far as 135 miles away. Their great sense of smell can also detect seizures, skin cancer cells, drugs, toxic wastes, etc.

Canine noses are also different than human noses in design. Exhaled air is released through the slits in the sides of their noses so outgoing air does not dilute the scented air streaming into the nostrils. Dogs breathe faster when trying to sniff a certain smell, and they widen their nostrils to pull in more air. Dogs are also able to smell so well because their olfactory bulb, which is where scent organs converge in the brain, is at least four times larger than that in humans.

Since canine noses are so sensitive, they are also vulnerable to many diseases. At least 19 diseases can compromise a dog's sense of smell. As a rule-of-thumb, long-nosed breeds can breathe easier but are more prone to nasal cancer, while short-nosed breeds have more breathing problems and are more vulnerable to overheating and heat stroke.

Any color of discharge from your dog's nose can be a sign of nasal problems. Blockage by tumors or other foreign bodies, and dryness or crustiness is also signs of nasal problems.

Some disorders and factors that can affect sense of smell:

- Hypothyroidism
- Distemper
- Flu or viruses
- Cushing's syndrome
- Nasal tumors
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes
- Old age
- Head trauma