



PET NEWS



SNAKE IN THE GRASS

SPRING HAS SPRUNG! WITH THE SHIFT IN SEASON COMES LONGER DAYS AND WARMER WEATHER, AND WE CAN ALL FINALLY START ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS AGAIN.

BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE.....

Snakes will be coming out of hibernation soon and with that comes the risk of our pets being bitten and exposed to snake venom. This can unfortunately lead to disastrous consequences, particularly in the spring when the snakes' venom is very potent.

There are three species of venomous snake common to southern Victoria: the **tiger snake**, the **eastern brown snake** and the red belly black snake. Although more common in rural areas, they have been known to frequent suburban dog-walking areas, especially along waterways like the Barwon River.

Our pet dogs and cats are affected by snakebites in different ways, mainly owing to the amount of venom injected, the bite site and the type of snake that caused the bite. If your dog has been off-lead in an area of tall grass and you suddenly see him or her vomit and collapse, and then spontaneously recover, be concerned that he or she may have received a multiple lethal dose. Carry your dog to the car, strap it in tight and phone the veterinary clinic straight away - this is an emergency.



Many dogs can recover if provided with life-saving treatment within half an hour of being bitten. The anti-venom used in veterinary medicine is multi-potent, and can be administered to most snakebite victims regardless of the species of snake involved.

If less venom has been injected then the symptoms may not be as obvious. Some dogs will develop vomiting, unusual breathing, bloody urine and weakness within two hours of being bitten. These patients also require anti-venom as these signs also indicate a lethal dose has been received.

If a dog has received a small dose (so-called sublethal) then symptoms will take several hours to appear, and often include dilated pupils, swallowing difficulty or voice change, as well as weakness. Cats often present with delayed symptoms, and no one really knows why. Anti-venom is useful for cases where there is still free circulating venom, as indicated by a urine test. So what can we do to be prepared?

If we choose to enjoy the outdoors with our dogs we should keep them on a lead when walking through areas prone to snakes. We should also ensure we keep our mobile phone charged in case an emergency call needs to be made. And remember, snakes are protected: if you see one you should calmly walk away and ensure not to agitate it, as it is illegal to kill them.



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CASE STUDY

BY THE SKIN OF THEIR TEETH



DURING NATIONAL DENTAL MONTH WE SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFORMED MANY PETS' MOUTHS, LEAVING THEM CLEAN, SWEET SMELLING AND COMFORTABLE.

ONE OF THE AWARDS FOR "MOST IMPROVED MOUTH" GOES TO AN 11 YEAR OLD JACK RUSSELL TERRIER PICTURED BELOW. ALL PHOTOS ARE TAKEN UNDER GENERAL ANAESTHESIA WITH AN ENDOTRACHEAL TUBE IN PLACE.

BEFORE



- Severe dental calculus (tartar) is visible on all the teeth.
- Two teeth have already fallen out due to periodontal disease.
- Pus along the gum line indicates gum and bone infection.

DURING

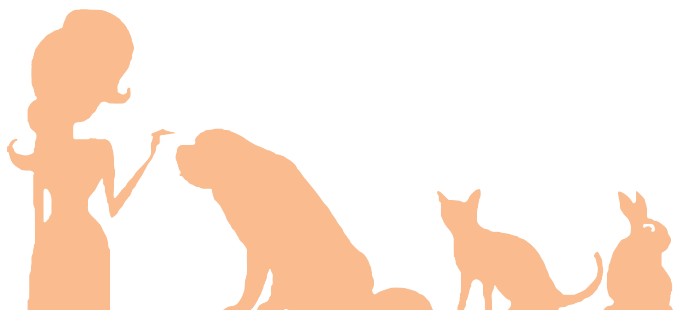


- The calculus has been scaled off and the full extent of gum and bone recession is evident.
- The gums are inflamed and swollen and the bifurcation (splitting) into tooth roots is visible.
- A metal probe can be passed between the tooth roots.

AFTER



- Teeth with this degree of bone loss cannot be salvaged. All the severely affected teeth were removed and the gums closed with dissolvable sutures.
- The remaining teeth have been scale and polished.
- This little dog will feel immediately more comfortable and within a week, once her gums have healed, she will be back eating dry food despite her missing teeth. She will also be much healthier in general with the bacterial load removed from her mouth.



FAQ:

SKIN ALLEGIES



COULD MY PET HAVE A SKIN ALLERGY?

Signs of skin allergies include scratching or biting at the skin (often creating sores), skin inflammation or rashes, hair loss, chewing or licking at the feet and recurrent ear infections.

Skin allergies usually present for the first time between 1 and 3 years of age but it can be much later. As a pet gets older, they often develop additional allergies and react more severely.

WHAT COULD THEY BE ALLERGIC TO?

Most skin allergies develop in response to inhaling an allergen or absorbing it through the skin. This is called atopy and is often seasonal, meaning it occurs at a particular time of the year. Common culprit allergens include pollens from trees, grass and weeds, house and dust mites, and moulds.

A small percentage of pets develop itchy skin in response to food and food additives. These pets often, but not always, have signs of a “sensitive stomach” and will vomit or have diarrhea after eating particular foods. Many cats and dogs are allergic to flea bites. In these cases, just one stray flea can make your pet intensely itchy.

MY PET IS GOING CRAZY, HOW DO I STOP THE SCRATCHING?

There are many effective treatments that help control itchy skin. Not everything works or is appropriate for every pet so patience and a systematic approach are required. Treatment options include:

1) AVOIDANCE

Realistically only possible for food or flea allergies and some contact allergies. Although if your pet has a grass allergy then wiping down paws and stomach after they have been running through grass helps reduce the amount of allergen exposure.

2) STEROIDS (CORTISONE)

Steroids come in injections, tablets and topicals and are extremely effective for relieving severe itching. They can have many short and long term side effects if not used correctly and because they do work so well they are often over used.

3) ANTIHISTAMINES

Antihistamines are effective in up to 30% of dogs and 70% of cats. When used as part of a treatment plan such as avoidance and Omega-3 fatty acids you can expect a better response. This reduces reliance on other drugs such as steroids. Every animal responds differently to different antihistamines so several may need to be trialed. Each antihistamine has a different dose and risk of side effects so should be used with veterinary guidance.

4) CYCLOSPORIN (ATOPICA)

Cyclosporine modulates the body’s immune response to allergens and is used very successfully for the treatment of atopic dogs with minimal side effects. The main drawback is cost, which is dose dependent and therefore influenced by the size of your dog.

5) IMMUNOTHERAPY

Immunotherapy is an excellent option for severe cases of atopy. An animal must undergo intradermal skin testing to identify the offending allergens. A tailored vaccination is then prepared which is initially administered weekly and then monthly to desensitise your pet and reduce reaction to allergens.

6) TOPICALS

Topical ointments or sprays containing cortisone are most practical for localised itching. Topical preparations are poorly absorbed into the blood stream and unlikely to create the long-term problems or side effects associated with oral or injectable steroids.

7) OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

These work in the skin to reduce the itchy chemicals that are released in response to allergens. Not all allergic pets respond but often omega-3 fatty acids can reduce reliance on other medications. Commercial preparations that are added to your pet’s food ensure an accurate dose and are extremely economical.

8) CONCURRENT TREATMENT

Bacterial or yeast infections commonly develop secondarily to damaged skin, making your pet feel even itchier. Tablets or ointments to treat these secondary infections may be required.

PUPPY SCHOOL GRADUATION



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR 'STUDENT' DOGS (AND THEIR OWNERS) FOR GRADUATING FROM PUPPY SCHOOL!

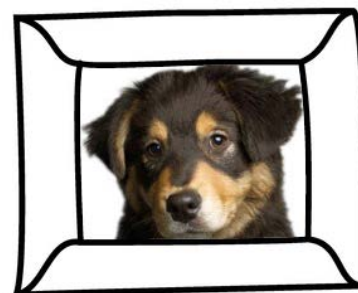
GIVE YOUR DOG THE SMARTS SIGN THEM UP TO PUPPY SCHOOL TODAY!



BRONTE



ESTHER



CASSIUS



MILO



MICHONNE



FINN



TILLEY



NEWSFLASH OCTOBER IS SENIOR PET MONTH

A DOG OR CAT OVER THE AGE OF 7-8 YEARS IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED A SENIOR PET AND CAN START TO SLOW DOWN.

THE BEST APPROACH TO CARING FOR YOUR SENIOR PET INCLUDES PREVENTATIVE DIAGNOSTICS SUCH AS TWICE YEARLY CHECK-UPS AND AN ANNUAL BLOOD TEST.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR SENIORS' MONTH
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\$140

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