



THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE SMALL ANIMAL TEAM - ISSUE # 47

SEPTEMBER 2018

Shucks. What Shocks?

When hearing a dog has a puffy lip, the last thing running through your mind is the dog has received an electric shock from biting a live wire. But yet in veterinary practice it is always best to expect the unexpected. The following is some further information about electric shock following on from our last newsletter.

A dog was found with severely swollen lips and third degree burns inside the mouth and tongue on the right side. As expected there was a resulting injury on the outside to the left of the nostril where the electricity would have run its course.

Electric cord bite injury is quite common in young puppies as they are always getting into everything and obviously enjoy biting anything they get their teeth on to.

But there can be quite fatal consequences to them getting tangled up with live wires. The level of shock that they receive is the major factor to determine what the outcome would be. It should always be classified as an emergency as even if the dog acts quite normal, severe tissue damage can occur resulting in severe burn wounds and even death.

When looking at what the effect would be on the dog, it would have to be determined how the electricity moved through the body. If it only moved through the oral cavity and out by the nose, as happened in this case, you won't really expect other organs to be affected but it can get worse. If the lungs or heart is affected this can cause severe respiratory distress or even abnormal heart rhythm which can result in death.

Signs to look out for when suspecting electric bite injury:

- ◆ Singed fur
- ◆ Coughing
- ◆ Oral ulcerations or wounds on tongue, lips, gums or palate
- ◆ Abnormal or open mouth breathing
- ◆ Blue gums
- ◆ Excess salivation or difficulty swallowing
- ◆ Restlessness or severely depressed.

Like stated above, this is classed as a real emergency, and even if the animal is alert and responsive, lots of damage could have occurred that is not easily visible.

First thing to do is make sure you don't get electrocuted when moving the animal and then get to the nearest veterinarian. Cold compresses can be placed on the area that received direct contact with the wires as it might reduce the level of tissue damage that occurs.

The Veterinarian would assess the situation and give supportive treatment depending on the severity of the situation. If the animal is in shock, then fluid therapy is indicated to stabilise the patient and improve circulation. The heart and lungs will be checked to see how well they are functioning and if they are affected, supportive medication can be given to assist normal heart rate and rhythm and increased aeration in the lungs.

Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs are also indicated as there would most likely be some trauma to skin and gums which can result in quite significant wounds. When the skin and gums are significantly damaged that they will die off, the affected skin would swell up and change colour. It might start to blister and pus might develop. If any signs appear please contact your veterinarian immediately.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a rare but often fatal disease seen in all animals. Often those that survive the disease have long lasting effects as a result. Tetanus is caused by a neurotoxin produced by a Clostridial bacteria. This bacteria lives in the environment and can last there for years. Clinical signs are usually seen 5-10 days after infection. In order to infect an animal the bacterial spores need to gain access to the body. This can only be done through wounds or penetrating injuries, the closer the injury to the central nervous system the quicker the onset of clinical signs. Once in the body the spores produce a toxin, this toxin gets into the nervous system and ascends through the nerves up to the brain. When it gets to the brain it reduces the release of neurotransmitters (nerve messengers) that tell the body to relax. As a result we see "hypersensitivity" of the nervous system.

Clinically we can see a range of signs. The most common are stiffness. Either a generalised body stiffness or a single limb. Certain reflexes become exaggerated and some diminished. Often we also see what is described as a "sardonic grin" on the animals face. Diagnosis is often made on clinical signs and history alone.

Treatment needs to be aggressive and therefore can be costly. High dose antibiotics need to be given and supportive therapy to reduce muscle tremors, the initial wound needs to be cleaned up as much as possible and overall intensive nursing care undergone. The quicker the treatment is started the better chance there is of it working. As the bacteria is present in the environment there is little we can do to prevent it occurring. However, the good news is that cats and dogs do have a natural low susceptibility and are unlikely to become infected.

Sally the sick puppy...

Sally is a young Chesapeake Retriever that came in to see us with a very interesting history. She had been fine all weekend and fine that morning when her mum let her out that morning but had started to look very sick over the morning. 3-4 hours after she had been let out she was very flat and had vomited in her kennel. She had not eaten anything unusual that we know of and had no access to poison.

In the clinic Sally was a very sick looking puppy. She was dehydrated and sore in her tummy. Her x-ray did not show us much so she was treated for pancreatitis. Sally stayed with us all week and would have days when she looked really good and then others when she looked very sad. She stopped eating and had not defecated for most of the week. After a week of no real improvement it was decided Sally would go for exploratory surgery. In surgery we found her gut had engulfed itself 3 times! (The fancy term for this is intussusception). She needed about 40cm of her gut removed and the ends stitched back together. She has recovered well and is finally eating and toileting reliably. She was sent home on antibiotics and last we heard is the happiest she has ever been.

Blue

There once was an old dog called Blue,
His back was sore but poor mum had no clue,
She did, however, know he loved bones in his
stew.



One fine day Blue felt the urge to go to the
loo,
He pushed and strained but still no poo.
A call to the vet made right on cue,
"Come down at once without further-a-do".



An x-ray and fluids for poor old Blue,
His back we cried its fused right through!
Some pain relief and an enema too,
How great we cheered he's done a poo!
Lucky for Blue his mum now knew,
No longer could he have bones in his stew.



10 Things about New Zealand Wildlife

1. New Zealand has only one type of native land mammal—Long Tailed & Short Tailed Bat
2. There are six different species of penguin in New Zealand
3. New Zealand is home to the world's heaviest insect—Giant Weta
4. There are no dangerous animals in New Zealand...
5. ... but kea will pull your car apart
6. There are no snakes in New Zealand
7. The south island is home to a carnivorous snail – Powelliphanta
8. New Zealand used to have giant birds—Moa
9. Tuatara are a living descendant of the dinosaur era and they happen to have a third eye
10. Kiwi birds can hold eggs that take up 20% of their body

