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Snake Bite

Australia has a large number of venomous snakes, the brown, tiger, and black snake account for majority of domestic snake bites that we see. Due to our pet's natural hunting instincts it is not uncommon for them to cross paths with a snake. When a snake bites an animal it injects venom via its fangs into the tissue below the skin. Snake venom carries a large range of toxins that damage the tissue and impair many of the body's vital functions; attacking the nervous system and interfering with the bodies clotting mechanisms.

What are the signs that my pet may have been bitten?

Animals bitten by a snake can have many different clinical signs that vary depending on the type of snake and amount of venom injected. Therefore your pet can show clinical signs suddenly or it may take several hours to become apparent.

Typical clinical signs include;

- ✦ Salivation / Drooling
- ✦ Vomiting
- ✦ Depression
- ✦ Muscle Weakness or Sudden Collapse
- ✦ Enlarged Pupils
- ✦ Rapid Breathing / Panting
- ✦ Blood in Urine

Seek Veterinary advice immediately if you suspect your pet has been bitten; the sooner treatment commences the better chance of survival.

Is there an effective diagnostic and treatment plan?

In conjunction with clinical symptoms veterinarians have access to several tests that can assist in diagnosing the presence of venom and also which type of snake's venom is responsible. This can be a crucial part of treatment as there are different antivenoms available for different snake types.

1. Activated Clotting Time (ACT) – Determines whether your pet's blood is clotting normally. This test is also used to monitor their response to treatment
2. CK – This measures muscle damage. In cases of Tiger snake envenomation this will typically be elevated.
3. Snake Venom Detection Kit – Using either a urine or blood sample the test is run to detect the presence of venom and will also determine what type of snake has bitten the patient.

Treatment consists of intravenous fluids and administration of the appropriate antivenom to neutralise the snake venom. Some patients may require multiple vials to achieve this.

Ongoing hospitalisation is required to provide supportive therapy of intravenous fluids and intensive nursing care during their recovery. Recovery may take a significantly long time depending on tissue damage and internal organs. In some cases oxygen supplementation may be necessary. On returning home pets will need to be kept quiet whilst recovery continues, restricting exercise and excitement for the following week.

Snake Bites left untreated are fatal, Seek Veterinary Advice Immediately.

“Caring for the pets of Ipswich since 1967”

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