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including holidays!**

**2013 Mountain
Science Expo**



R.E.A.C.H. was a proud sponsor of this years Mountain Science Expo at the North Carolina Arboretum. Click [here](#) to see more photos from this

R.E.A.C.H. Spring 2013 Newsletter

Greetings,

Spring has sprung!

This is a great time of year to be outside and enjoy the beautiful natural landscape that surrounds us here in Asheville. As you head outdoors with your pet, please remember to bring plenty of fresh water, avoid heavy exercise on hot days, and watch out for snakes! It is also very important to never leave your pet unattended in a car - even for a short period of time. What may seem like a mild 70 degree day to you will feel like 120 degrees to your pet in mere minutes! Read on for some articles that contain valuable information for you and your pet this season.

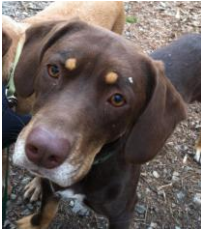
Preventing Heat Stroke in your dog.



If your companion animal is overheating, they will usually appear sluggish and may not respond to you. His or her tongue and gums may be bright red and very dry, and they may be vomiting or having diarrhea. He or she may also have an unusual

event.

Patient Update!



Sophia came to reach after she had been hit by a car and a good samaritan picked her up. After her original owner wanted to surrender her, the good samaritan decided he wanted to give her a home. With the help of some local donors, Dr. Wood and the AVS Staff, and R.E.A.C.H., Sophia is back to her old tricks and playing at the dog park. We could not be happier for her!

breathing pattern, panting very hard, or have a high heart rate. Heat stroke in animals is very serious and can be life-threatening. If your animal has been exposed to elevated temperatures and exhibits any of these signs, seek emergency veterinary help immediately.

Heat stroke's deadly affects

Animals that overheat can develop kidney problems, bleeding disorders, and brain damage very rapidly, sometimes within a few minutes. As a result, an animal can go into a coma and die. On the way to the veterinarian, cool your animal down with wet towels, by spritzing them with cool water, or by providing ice chips for them to chew if they are conscious. (Note: these measures are not substitutes for medical treatment.)

Heat stroke prevention

Heat stroke is preventable. When the weather is warm, your companion animals must have access to plenty of water and should not be left outside for long periods. If you must leave your animal outside, make sure that they have a cool, shady area in which to rest.

Additionally, if you exercise your animal, do it in the early morning or late evening - not in the middle of the day when temperatures are at their peak. And NEVER leave your animal in a car, even if you leave the windows down. Your furry friend could die of heat stroke in as little as 10 to 15 minutes.

Remember the factors that increase an animal's risk of developing heat stroke: water deprivation, excessive humidity, obesity, excessive exercise, cardiovascular disease, and lack of acclimatization to the temperature. Don't forget, your companion animal relies on YOU, so take good care of him/her and enjoy your summer together!

If you have questions regarding heat stroke, talk with your veterinarian or call us at 828-665-4399.

To read more articles on our website, click [here](#).

Snake Bites in Pets

By: Katie Gibson, DVM

It is summertime and you and your pets are spending a lot more time outdoors enjoying the pleasant weather. Well guess what, you're not the only creatures enjoying the nice weather. Yes, about this time of year



veterinarians begin to see dogs and cats come into the hospital for treatment of snakebites. Here are some things that you should know to help keep your pet safe from these slithery creatures.

First of all, not all snakes are venomous. There are many more species of non-venomous snakes in this area than there are venomous ones. Venomous snakes that your pet may be exposed to fall into two major categories: the crotalids and the elapids. Crotalids belong to the pit viper family and include snakes such as the copperheads, rattlesnakes, and water moccasins (also known as cottonmouths). These snakes have the classic triangular-shaped head, cat-like eyes, and tend to be heavy bodied. These snakes can be found across most of the North America. The elapids are the most deadly venomous snakes. Luckily, in North America the coral snake is the only member of this group. Coral snakes have red, white/yellow, and black banding and can usually only be found in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas, and the coastal planes on North Carolina. I highly recommend looking at photographs or visiting your local nature center to be able to identify the venomous snakes in your area. In Western North Carolina the types of venomous snake that pets typically encounter are the copperhead and the rattlesnake, and for the purpose of this article, these are the types of snakes I shall focus on.

When a venomous snake encounters a human or a pet, its first instinct is to flee not to bite. The purpose of snake venom is to allow the snake to catch small prey items. It will use it for self-defense only when necessary. The venom that the snake produces is stored in sacs located behind the eyes. The snake can control how much is released into its hollow fangs and injected into its victim. This venom causes local tissue injury, coagulation disorders, and can affect the cardiovascular system and the respiratory systems. A venomous snake may or may not inject venom with every bite. A bite where venom is not injected is known as a "dry bite". The size of the snake does not necessarily indicate how much or how little venom is injected. The snake has the ability to control how much venom is injected. Frequently smaller snakes will actually inject more venom than larger snakes because they fear for their life.

How do you know if a venomous snake has bitten your pet?

A dog or cat bitten by a venomous snake will be extremely painful where he/she is bitten. Dogs and cats can be bitten anywhere, but they are often bitten on the muzzle or on a limb. You may be able to see two puncture wounds from the

fangs, but these wounds can be difficult to see. The most common finding that you will easily be able to detect is swelling around the bite site. The pet may be very weak and lethargic and there can be some vomiting, but these signs are not always present. Other things that can look similar to a snakebite are allergic reactions from insect stings, blunt trauma, an animal bite, or an abscess. If you are unsure if a venomous snake has bitten your pet it is best to contact a veterinarian.

What should you do if a snake bites your pet?

It is NOT necessary to kill the snake in order to identify it! If you can identify the snake, it is helpful, however, do not get close enough to the snake to put yourself at risk of getting bitten. Humans are at greater risk of being bitten by a snake if they are trying to harm it, so attempting to kill it can actually put you at greater risk of being bitten than if you let the snake slither off into the woods. In this area, the treatment for copperhead bites and rattlesnake bites is essentially the same so identification is not crucial. The next thing you should do is attempt to keep your pet calm and contact a veterinarian. Be aware that a pet will be very painful after being bitten. Use caution when handling your pet. The painful bite may cause your pet to snap at you or bite you when being handled. If you need to lift your pet into a car, a muzzle or wrapping the pet in a thick comforter may be necessary to keep you safe. Cats should be transported in a cat carrier or box if possible.

There are a number of treatments for snakebites that have fallen out of favor over the years, here are some things you should NOT do. Do not put any sort of tourniquet on your pet. Do not apply ice. Do not make any cuts into the skin and do not try to suck the poison out. Do not apply a compression bandage to the wound. These treatments can cause harm to your pet or harm to you.

Once you get your pet to a veterinary hospital your veterinarian will advise you on the best tests and treatment for your pet based on his/her condition. Your veterinarian may want to look at a blood smear to help determine if it was in fact a venomous snake that bit your pet. Often, but not always, the red blood cells of a pet that was bitten will look spiky when viewed under a microscope. Since snake venom can cause a bleeding disorder, your veterinarian may want to test your pet's clotting times. Other tests that may be performed include a CBC, a chemistry panel, a urinalysis, blood pressure, and an EKG. Your veterinarian will treat your pet based on how severely he or she is affected. Treatments may include pain medication, intravenous fluids, anti-histamines, steroids, antibiotics, and antivenin.

Not all snakebites require antivenin. Antivenin is useful in cases where your pet's clotting times are affected. The antivenin can help prevent bleeding disorders. Antivenin can also help reduce the amount of swelling. It is best if antivenin is administered within four to six hours once a pet is bitten. Pets can have a serious allergic reaction to antivenin. Your veterinarian will advise you if he/she thinks your animal would benefit from antivenin. Your veterinarian will take precautions to minimize the chance of an allergic developing if this product is administered.

What is the prognosis for your pet if is bitten by a venomous snake?

With the types of venomous snakes that are found in Western North Carolina it is rare for pets that receive veterinary attention to die from snakebites, but in some cases it does happen. The majority of pets will be uncomfortable and swollen for several days. The skin around the bite may become discolored and in some animals the skin will slough several days later. Most pets will stay in the hospital for observation for 12-24 hours and then go home with appropriate medications once they are deemed stable and their pain can be managed at home. More severe cases may require hospitalization for several days. If the skin around the bite does slough, additional veterinary care will be needed.

What can you do to prevent your pet from being bitten by a snake?

Venomous snakes can often be found basking in the sun, warming themselves on the side of asphalt roads in the evenings, and hiding under rocks and logs. Be vigilant if you are in an area where you expect to find snakes and keep your pets on a leash when going for walks. Clear away logs, rocks, and debris from your property to discourage snakes from seeking refuge here. There are some snake repellants on the market that can be applied to your property as well. If you encounter a snake it is best to get your pets under control and freeze. Allow the snake to move away or change your route to avoid it. Treat all snakes as potentially venomous if you are unable to identify the type of snake it is.

If you encounter a venomous snake while hiking with your pet this summer I hope you will have a healthy respect for these amazing creatures and get to marvel in their beauty. However, if a bite to your pet does occur, contact your veterinarian so the appropriate care can be given to your pet.

Click [here](#) to read more articles on our website.

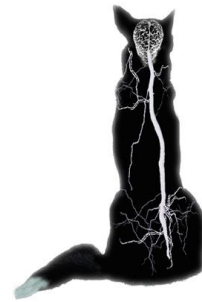
Seizures: What To Do In An Emergency

By: Jeff Johansson, DVM

A seizure is a sudden disruption of the brain's normal electrical activity and can result in loss of consciousness, loss of motor function, and repetitive muscle activity or convulsions.

Seizures occur relatively commonly in dogs and cats and can occur from a variety of causes.

Seizures can occur from head trauma, metabolic disorders such as low blood sugar, electrolyte abnormalities, infectious diseases, brain tumors, toxin ingestion, or in some cases, an inherited disorder called idiopathic epilepsy.



Diagnosis of the underlying cause of a seizure is usually based on patient age, history/ timing of the seizure events, blood testing, and in some cases, referral to a veterinary neurologist for advanced testing such as CT, MRI, spinal tap, and other diagnostic means.

Typically with a generalized seizure, an animal temporarily loses consciousness and thus does not recognize its surroundings or owners. This is important because people can easily get bitten by a seizing animal while trying to provide comfort and assistance.

While seeking prompt veterinary medical attention is almost always recommended, there are some important things that one can do prior to transport that can help lead to a favorable outcome. Here are a few suggestions for responding to a seizing dog and cat.

Rule #1:

Do not get bitten! Do not put your hands near the animal's mouth. There is a common misconception that animals may swallow their tongues and not be able to breathe during a seizure event. As mentioned previously, an animal loses consciousness during a seizure and is unaware of its jaw movements.

Unfortunately caretakers are often bitten trying to assist a seizing animal, and this may well lead to two emergency room visits, one for the pet and one for the owner. Animals do not choke while seizing, and it is highly advised to keep hands away from the mouth/ teeth. Small children should not be allowed near a seizing animal.

Other tips are:

- Make sure that there are no objects in the vicinity of the animal that could lead to injury (sharp objects, furniture, stairways, etc).
- Try to make a mental note of how long the seizure lasts, as well as any abnormal symptoms that may have been exhibited prior to a seizure (changes in behavior, appetite, possible toxin exposure, medication ingestion, activity prior to seizure, time of day, etc). For animals with chronic seizures, a log may be kept (date, timing, preceding symptoms, and outcome), and this may help in the event of future episodes with regard to treatment decisions.
- Stay calm. Seizures can be a frightening time for those involved. Fortunately, the pet is not likely suffering or experiencing any trauma, so a calm approach is the best approach so that the pet can receive appropriate care and avoid any further complications.
- Call your veterinarian or an emergency clinic immediately for further recommendations before administering any type of medication or treatment.
- Small dogs/ cats can usually be wrapped in a towel or blanket and safely transported to a vehicle for transport to a veterinary hospital. Do not attempt to restrain or hold down an animal during transport, and avoid contact with the mouth (remember Rule #1!). If possible, you may try to put them into a crate with the lid removed or other open container so that they don't fall from a seat.
- For large dogs, you may double-fold a blanket to make a stretcher that can be gradually and gently placed beneath the seizing or unresponsive pet. Two people will likely be needed to transport the animal, so ask a family member/ neighbor to assist.

Upon arrival at a veterinary facility, the animal will be evaluated and may need medications/ diagnostic testing/ etc. A thorough history will help the staff determine possible causes of the seizure and the most appropriate treatment, and this is where a log or time course of the episode will be helpful.

Some animals may require long-term medication, and there are a variety of medications designed to treat or prevent seizures in cats and dogs.

So in review:

1. DO NOT GET BITTEN!
2. Take measures to avoid injuries to the seizing animal

- (stairs, sharp objects, etc).
3. Stay calm.
 4. Call your veterinarian.
 5. Use towels/ blankets/ other people to safely transport the animal and avoid further injury to the pet as well as the caretakers.
 6. Keep a log of seizure activity for reference.

We see a lot of seizures here at R.E.A.C.H. A seizure is a sudden disruption of the brain's normal electrical activity and can result in loss of consciousness, loss of motor function, and repetitive muscle activity or convulsions. Seizures occur relatively commonly in dogs and cats and can occur from a variety of causes.

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