

Bee Stings in Dogs

- Just like in people, a bee sting can be serious; dogs are more likely to be stung because of their natural curiosity and playful nature.
- If a dog is stung by a bee or shows signs of a bee sting, remove the stinger if possible and seek professional help from your veterinarian.
- Bee stings can be successfully treated and sometimes prevented.

What You Need to Know

Bee stings can be a serious event and even life threatening in some cases. Dogs are at greater risk for bee stings than people, as they tend to chase or play with things that move. Dogs are likely to get stung in the mouth or on the nose, face, or feet by several different insects, including bees, wasps, and hornets.

If your dog suffers a bee sting, seek veterinary assistance. If you wait for an allergic reaction to occur, you may already be too late; your dog could become very ill very quickly.

Signs of Bee Stings

- Crying out, running in circles, salivating
- Mild signs include swelling of the area; scratching, rubbing, licking, or chewing at the sting
- Severe signs include profound swelling of the face, throat, or neck; hives; vomiting; difficulty breathing; collapse

Types of Bee Stings

- A bee sting reaction may be as mild as slight burning or itching for several minutes
- More venomous insect stings may cause profound swelling, pain, itching, and redness
- In the most extreme situation a dog may have *anaphylactic shock* (a life-threatening, severe, allergic reaction) as a result of exposure to the insect venom. These signs can include difficulty breathing, collapse, and death.

What to Do

If your dog is stung by an insect, the most important thing to remember is to remain calm. If you think you can remove the stinger, doing so may reduce the amount of venom injected. You can try to remove the stinger by scraping a credit card across the dog's skin to flick the stinger out. Do not try to remove the stinger by pinching/pulling it (as you might remove a splinter); this may actually increase the amount of venom that is injected.

Severe allergic reactions can happen very quickly and can become life threatening within minutes. If your pet suffers an insect sting, seek veterinary care as soon as possible. If you wait for signs of an allergic reaction to be apparent, you may be losing precious time.

Although there is no antidote for bee stings, your veterinarian can assess your dog and administer medications to treat an allergic reaction. If you were not able to remove the stinger or it is in the mouth or is otherwise hard to reach, your veterinarian can assist with this. Medication to ease the pain and itching associated with stings can be administered by your veterinarian. In the case of a severe reaction or anaphylaxis, hospitalization for observation and more intensive care may be recommended.

Prevention

To minimize exposure to bee stings, try to help your pet avoid flower beds, a favorite habitat of bees. Bees also may build nests in eaves of houses and in trees. Some hornets and wasps build their nests in the ground, so pay careful attention to where your dog may be digging when he is outside.

It is always a good idea to monitor your property for nests and have them removed when detected. Bees abound in the spring and summer, and "bee proofing" your dog's environment is a big job. It is a good idea to have the phone numbers for your veterinarian and local veterinary emergency clinic on hand in case your dog is stung.