



Seasonal Focus: Bites & Stings

Dogs are curious creatures and their playful tendency towards sniffing and exploring unusual places can sometimes get them into trouble. Particularly during the spring and summer months when gardens and hedgerows are in full bloom the interruption of a big, wet nose can draw an unwelcome response. The most common place to find insect bites on dogs is on the face, head or areas around the mouth. Insect bites on dogs are usually from bees, wasps, hornets or ants. Although deemed to be a minor injury these can lead to very severe reactions. If there is major swelling, or the animal seems disorientated, sick or has trouble moving or breathing, go to the vet immediately. Dogs will usually show symptoms within 20 minutes of the bite/sting, but you should observe them closely for the next 24 hours as mild symptoms can develop over this period.

Stings and insect bites on dogs result in inflammation and pain which may take up to an hour to subside. The sting site will feel hot to the touch and form a raised lump. If the bee/wasp stinger is left behind, it contains muscle tissues that keep contracting and injecting more venom into the dog. The best way to remove the stinger is scraping it off, moving parallel to the skin surface, using a credit card or other stiff-edged object. DO NOT use tweezers to pull out the stinger as it may cause it to release more venom.

Symptoms:

- Swelling on the eyelids/ear flaps/lips or the entire face (angioedema).
- If the dog is bitten on the nose or mouth, it will lead to large swelling and the animal will have difficulty breathing.
- Urticaria (hives) are observed on the skin - usually itchy and can cause anaphylactic reactions.
- Wheezing
- Weakness
- Increased heart rate and fever which may cause the animal to go into shock.
- Other symptoms may include: cold extremities, trembling, vomiting, diarrhoea and collapse.

If significant swelling is present or any of the above symptoms phone your vet immediately and be prepared to transport your pet to the practice. Few insect bites on dogs are extremely dangerous, but some can cause discomfort and irritation.

Treatment:

- For bee and wasp stings you can apply aloe vera gel to the affected area - this will soothe the pain and hot sensation that they will be feeling.
- A cotton wool ball saturated in witch hazel and applied to the sting site will also help to alleviate heat and soreness.
- Once the stinger has been removed you can bathe bee/wasp stings with a diluted solution of baking soda mixed with water until it becomes a paste. Also apply a cold pack (lined with a cloth) for five minutes several times a day to reduce the swelling and pain.