

Equally Painful for You and Your Pet, This Seasonal Mishap Can Be Fatal

Just as this encounter can bring you lots of discomfort, it's the same for your dog, and with their smaller body size, can even be fatal if they react. How to know when it happens and what to do immediately if these red flags develop.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Just like people, dogs can be stung by bees, wasps and hornets, and it's as painful for them as it is for us
- The most common areas on dogs' bodies for insect stings are the nose, mouth and paws
- If your dog's muzzle or face swells after an insect sting, if hives develop, or he has trouble breathing, it's a medical emergency and you should seek immediate veterinary care for your pet
- In non-emergency situations, it's important to find and remove the stinger, and if the area is itchy or inflamed, give your dog quercetin or Benadryl to interrupt the allergic, inflammatory response
- If your dog tends to snap at and swallow bees and wasps, consider giving him quercetin before allowing him outdoors during the warmer months of the year

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Despite their fur-covered bodies, dogs can be stung by flying insects like bees, wasps and hornets just like people can. This is especially true for dogs who become curious or stalker-ish when they spot a stinging insect.

Unlike humans who typically dodge, weave and run away from the tiny buzzing beasts, many dogs try to move in closer for a better look, and some even snap at the insects with their mouths. If your furry family member gets stung, rest assured the bite is just as painful for her as it would be for you. Even more worrisome is the possibility of a serious or even life-threatening allergic reaction when a dog is stung.

How to Know if Your Dog Has Been Stung

The three areas of your dog's body most likely to be stung are the nose, mouth, and less frequently, the paws. Certainly a swollen muzzle is a sign your dog may have encountered a stinging insect.

A dog who has been stung may also suddenly begin running in circles, yelping, and/or pawing at his face or rubbing it against the ground. If this is happening to your dog, chances are you'll find evidence in the immediate area such as a beehive, wasp nest or insects buzzing around.

Like humans, dogs experience a variety of reactions to being stung, including scratching, licking and biting the area where the sting occurred. You might also notice a patch of red, inflamed skin. These are relatively benign reactions to a sting.

In more serious cases, the dog's muzzle, head or neck area will swell noticeably. There may also be extreme pain, the appearance of hives, vomiting and difficulty breathing. This is considered a severe allergic reaction that can progress quickly to anaphylactic shock, which is a life-threatening emergency.

Like people, some dogs are more sensitive to insect stings than others. Smaller dogs often don't fare as well as the big guys, and swarms of bees are especially dangerous — even fatal.

If Your Dog Has a Severe Reaction to a Sting

The reason dogs' noses are so often stung is because canines go through life nose-first. And dogs who like to snap at flying insects can also be stung inside the mouth or even in the throat.

If a serious allergic reaction occurs after a bee sting to your dog's nose, mouth or face, the resulting swelling can interfere with her ability to breathe. This is a special problem for dogs with flat faces (brachycephalic breeds, e.g., the Boxer, Bulldog, and Pug). Needless to say, if you know or suspect your dog has been stung by an insect and her muzzle or face begins to swell, you should get her to your veterinarian or an emergency animal hospital right away. Do the same if your pet has been attacked by a swarm.

Home Care for Non-Emergency Stings

If the situation isn't an emergency, you'll need to try to find and remove the stinger as soon as possible to reduce the amount of venom that gets into the bite. Tweezers aren't a good tool for this job. Instead, use a credit card from your wallet to gently scrape away the stinger, ensuring the venom sac comes out with it.

After removing the stinger, you can make a paste of baking soda and water, and apply it to the area to help soothe the itch and irritation. Prevent your dog from licking the area and rinse away the paste after about 15 minutes. You can also offer Apis Mel, along with quercetin ("nature's Benadryl") if you have it, or real Benadryl if you don't, with a starting dose a milligram per pound of body weight.

If the diphenhydramine (Benadryl) isn't working, it's time to head to the closest veterinary clinic for further treatment to prevent the inflammatory response from escalating. It's also important to remember not to let your dog back into the area where he encountered the stinging insects. If he's stung again right after the original sting, there's a good chance he'll have a faster and more serious allergic reaction.

If your dog tends to snap at and swallow bees and wasps, consider giving him quercetin before allowing him outdoors during the warmer months of the year. Also talk with your veterinarian about other preventive measures.

Five Quick Home Remedies for Other Minor Dog Illnesses and Injuries

1. **Problem: Nail injury** — Dogs can slice up their nails in a variety of ways — everything from a too-close nail trim that nicks the quick, to running outdoors over sharp rocks.

Solution: Styptic powder — If you don't have styptic powder on hand, for minor bleeding, grab either cornstarch or flour from your kitchen, pour some into a small bowl and dip the injured paw into the powder to stop the bleeding.

2. **Problem: Cuts and scrapes** — Many dogs manage to acquire minor cuts and scrapes while running around the backyard or while out for a walk.

Solution: Contact lens saline solution — You can clean dirt and debris from your pet's minor wound with regular human contact lens saline solution. You can also use it to flush out dirt, sand or other irritants from your dog's eye.

3. **Problem: Indiscriminate eating** — If your dog has very recently ingested something she shouldn't, for example, antifreeze or another toxin, you may need to induce vomiting. Always call your vet or an animal poison control hotline if you suspect your pet has swallowed a poison.

Solution: 3% hydrogen peroxide — The dose is 1 teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight. Hydrogen peroxide typically induces vomiting within 15 minutes. If your dog doesn't vomit within that time, you can give her a second dose, but if another 15 minutes passes and she still hasn't vomited, it's time to call your veterinarian.

4. **Problem: Constipation, diarrhea and other minor digestive issues** — All dogs at one time or another experience GI issues that last for a few days and disappear.

Solution: Canned pumpkin — It's a good idea to keep a can of 100% pumpkin in your kitchen cabinet for occasional mild tummy upsets. Give a teaspoon of pumpkin for every 10 pounds of body weight, one to two times a day, either in food or as a treat. Pumpkin is rich in soluble fiber that can ease both diarrhea and constipation.

5. **Problem: Thunderstorm phobia** — Many dogs fear thunderstorms. But it's not just the thunder and lightning that makes your dog anxious, it's also the static electricity that can accumulate in his coat, giving him little electric zaps that are unnerving.

Solution: A steamy room — Pets with thunderstorm phobia often feel more comfortable in a steamy/humid space that removes static from their coat, so try putting your dog in the bathroom while running hot water in the shower. Alternatively, you can rub his coat with a non-toxic dryer sheet for the same effect. Many dryer sheets are loaded with chemicals that shouldn't remain on the fur, so make sure you're using safe dryer sheets.

Sources and References

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