

Anal Furunculosis

What is anal furunculosis?

Anal Furunculosis is a severe ulcerative condition of the tissues surround the anus.

The ulcers are linked to deep tracts of diseased tissue and sometimes these tracts of infection link into ruptured or fistulated anal glands.

The condition is seen most often in the German Shepherd Dog and is severely debilitating leading to much pain and often eventually to faecal incontinence.

How do I recognise the lesions?

Frustrating often the lesions visible are often very tiny at first .

It may be more of a clue that your pet is spending more time licking and grooming around the anal area.

Careful inspection ,that sometimes may require sedation,can reveal areas of under run skin, and tracts of infection.

What is normally done if Furunculosis is suspected?

If we suspect Furunculosis we will most likely advise anaesthesia for full investigation,and often surgery to dissect out the tracts of infection.

If the anal glands seem to be involve, at the same surgery the anal glands are removed.The surgery is delicate and lengthy and not without risk.

Samples of the tissue removed will be sent for histopathology.

The major risks of surgery around the anus are ensuing faecal incontinence and wound infections post operatively as it is such a difficult area to keep clean. It is also imperative post operatively that the dog does not lick at the wounds as this will only make things worse.

The first few days after surgery require a lot of management and often it will require hospitalisation.

What is the prognosis after surgery?

The prognosis for any animal diagnosed with Furunculosis is guarded. It is often only at the surgery the vet will learn of the true extent of the furunculosis lesions as by their nature they are tunnelled under the skin.

Are there any medical treatments available?

Some investigators now believe there may be an autoimmune component to the progression of Furunculosis.

It has been shown that some cases can show good response to a drug called cyclosporine (trade name atopica), though if the anal glands are fistulated surgery should be considered first. Cyclosporin is a potent immunosuppressive drug and is often used with another drug called ketokonazole (trade name nizoral). The use of nizoral can allow reductions in dosage levels of cyclosporine, to achieve the same effect.

Antibiotics and steroids are also sometimes used by clinicians.

Summary

Unfortunately anal furunculosis is a frustrating and complex disease to treat.

Despite surgery and drug management approaching 30% of cases will not achieve a cure, and even in those dogs who do achieve remission, relapse is not uncommon.

Further studies into the patho-physiology of furunculosis in the GSD are needed.

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