



## Adder Bites.

- Most adder bites occur between April and July
- Adder venom is a cytotoxic mixture of enzymes; the adder injects this into its prey in order to subdue it before eating it.
- Adders don't just attack but may bite if provoked.

### Signs and symptoms of an Adder bite

- In almost all cases there is swelling at the bite site, usually within two hours. Other possible symptoms including pain, bruising, bleeding and lameness.
- If venom is absorbed into the lymphatic system it will cause a widespread inflammatory reaction leading to symptoms such as lethargy, fever, increased heart and respiratory rates, drooling, vomiting and a wobbly gait. (The dog may seem drunk)
- In less than 5% of cases there is severe systemic effects. These include problems breathing, collapse, convulsions, kidney failure, liver injury, bleeding disorders, shock and an abnormal heart rhythm.

### Factors that influence severity.

- The location of the bite (facial bites are more serious) does influence the speed of recovery.
- The size of the dog (small dogs tend to be more severely affected).
- The amount and potency of the venom (it is thought that the venom is more potent early in the season),
- The amount the dog moves following a bite (movement increases venom uptake into the dogs circulation),

### What should you do?

- If your dog is bitten, minimize their movement. Pick the dog up if possible.
- Stay calm, keep the dog calm.
- Call the vet to tell them you are coming.

### What will the vet do?

- Intravenous fluid therapy (a drip) and cage rest the dog to minimize venom absorption.
- "If" they have anti venom they will use it. Anti-venom binds to the enzymes within the venom thereby rendering them inactive and unable to cause damage. Anti-venom may be used in all cases but is especially recommended for potentially serious cases. It should be given as soon as possible for maximum benefit and will show a significant reduction in the degree and duration of the swelling.
- **Anti-venom can be difficult to obtain and is not licensed for use in animals in the UK. Not many vets have anti venom, as it must be imported from Europe.!**
- In cases where anti-venom is not to be used your vet may give a steroid injection. This is a potent anti-inflammatory drug
- Adder bites are definitely painful so it is imperative that the dog is given strong pain relievers.

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*\* Standard VPIS consult fee applies*

