

May 18th 2022 - Official Communication

Central Island Veterinary
Emergency Hospital
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Dear Community,

Necrotizing fasciitis is an uncommon disease in dogs but given the amount of cases we have seen recently, it is important that we, as pet owners (myself included) are vigilant. However, the first thing we must not do is panic. I would like to take this time to give you an overview of the disease so that you know what to look out for and when to seek veterinary care.

What is necrotizing fasciitis (NF)?

NF is a deep-seated infection of the skin, underlying fat layer and fascia (the band of connective tissue surrounding muscles). A number of different bacterial species have been known to cause NF, most commonly Streptococci species.

What are some of the potential risk factors?

The bacteria typically gains access to underlying tissues through puncture wounds, skin infections or other trauma however, an obvious wound is not always seen. Immune-suppressed patients may be more at risk due to a lesser ability to fight off infection. There is no age or sex predilection for this disease.

What should you look out for as a pet owner?

Pets with pain (especially of a limb) with or without swelling should seek veterinary medical care. Usually, there is no discoloration of the skin however, this can develop over the course of a few hours. A fever is a commonly seen with NF patients.

If my pet is diagnosed with NF, what can I expect?

Patients with NF require urgent and intensive therapy. Treatment is usually targeted at two main areas: management of the fasciitis; and supportive care and stabilization. Surgical intervention involves eliminating infected tissue in an attempt to halt spread of the infection. This can range from small sections of tissue removal up to amputation.

Conclusion

At this time, there has been no definitive link to any of the cases that we have seen. Any patient with localized pain, swelling and a fever should have NF placed on their list of possible diagnoses however this does not mean that every patient with these symptoms has NF. If you are concerned that your pet has any of these symptoms then please reach out to us for veterinary care and we will direct you appropriately.

Thank you,

Dr. Nikolas Bell
Medical Director

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Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/necrotizing-fasciitis.html>