



Spirocerca Lupi

This is an increasingly common condition that largely goes unnoticed until often it is too late.

Spirocerca Lupi is a worm. Part of its lifecycle is in the common dung beetle or indirectly when a dog or very occasionally a cat eats a bird, rodent or reptile that may have eaten a dung beetle. Once in your dog's stomach it migrates into the blood stream and travels up into the aorta (main artery leaving the heart) from here it migrates across into the oesophagus and burrows into the wall where it forms a cyst (closed sac). This process takes 2-3 months.

Once in the oesophageal wall, this cyst matures into a granuloma which is a defined lump of inflamed tissue. It causes a swelling. It is in this form that it grows and multiplies and can go unnoticed for months. As it gets bigger, it causes irritation resulting in regurgitation, coughing, retching, gagging and vomiting.

It can be diagnosed with a special stool test, x-rays and certain contrast studies. It is also often advised to scope the oesophagus and get a visual on the granuloma as some of the more mature granulomas can undergo neoplastic transformation into a squamous cell carcinoma which is potentially very dangerous and malignant. With a scope it is possible to take a small sample of tissue to send to the lab to test for this dangerous complication.

Treatment is intensive and involved and there are many different regimes. We will initiate weekly injections for 6-12 weeks until the granuloma has satisfactorily shrunk and or disappeared on repeat scope.

Prevention is very important. If you stay in an area frequented by dung beetles (Delta Park for example) it is a good idea to speak to us about one of the following.

1. 3monthly injections
2. Regular deworming with an appropriate dewormer (monthly)
3. Monthly application of certain topical products.

Above all if you are worried or uncertain please do not hesitate to call or come in. We will be more than happy to help.

Regards FVC team

Dr J.vdV. Basch BVSc

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