

Medical Notes

EPA Investigating Spot-On Flea and Tick Insecticides

By Sheila Bennet, DVM

A recent local news story brought to light the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) advisory concerning spot-on pesticide products for flea and tick control in cats and dogs. In April 2009 the EPA announced its decision to evaluate 70 currently registered products, due to increases in the number of reported adverse reactions to these products. The reactions reported range from mild skin irritation to seizures and even death. The EPA is NOT recalling any of these products, nor are they suggesting that these products should not be used. Rather, the EPA is thoroughly evaluating these products and may implement additional label restrictions or remove certain spot-on products from the market in the future. In the meantime, the EPA advises owners to discuss flea and tick products with their veterinarian, to carefully follow label directions and to monitor their animals closely after application of a spot-on product.

The veterinarians at Bulger Animal Hospital believe that flea and tick prevention is an extremely important part of keeping our animals healthy. Fleas can cause hair loss, skin problems and even anemia. Ticks can carry a number of diseases, including Lyme, that can infect your pets and your family if they are bitten. An important first step in flea and tick prevention is daily tick checks of dogs and outdoor cats, especially during the height of tick season. Spot-on medications can be very effective in flea and tick prevention. In order to keep your dogs and cats safe, however, we do make the following recommendations:

- Discuss with your veterinarian which product is best for your cat and/or dog. Not all products are the same – certain products may be safer or more effective for your pet.
- Read the label carefully and follow the directions exactly. Pay close attention to whether the product is for a cat or a dog, and use the appropriate dose for your pet's weight and age range.
- Monitor your pet for any side effects following application of the product.
 - If your pet has a reaction to a product, bathe him/her with mild soap, rinse with a lot of water and contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet appears ill in any way after product application (including vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy and decreased appetite).

InTown Veterinary Group is dedicated to providing clients with an unparalleled range of veterinary care options.

The doctors at Bulger Animal Hospital & Essex County Veterinary Referral Hospital are always on hand no matter how seemingly small the question. We care about you and your pets. If you're worried, call us.

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For more information, feel free to use the medical index on our website. www.InTownBulger.com, then click "Medical Index".

Doggie Den

Don't Dig Your Dog's Digging?

By Kathryn Wrubel, Ph.D.

Is your dog's digging driving you crazy? Are you spending your days off filling in holes in your yard? Digging can be a frustrating problem for owners but it is a natural behavior for dogs. Dogs dig for several reasons: to provide a cool place to lie down, to flush out prey, to stash away toys and bones, to escape the yard, because there is something interesting beneath the ground, because they are bored, and for some dogs digging is just plain fun.

Why they Dig:

Determining the reason for your dog's digging will help you to solve the issue. Certain breeds of dogs are more prone to digging than others. To terriers, Dachshunds and other breeds bred to hunt and rout out vermin, digging is "all in a day's work". Other hunting breeds such as scent hounds (Beagles, Basset Hounds, etc.) are also notorious diggers that may be on the trail to something bigger and better outside of your yard. Heavy-coated breeds (Huskies and other Spitz breeds) may dig to provide a cool spot to lie down in on a hot summer day. An intact (unneutered) male dog may dig his way out to seek out nearby females in heat. Some dogs with separation anxiety and noise phobias will also try to escape the yard in a panic. Finally some dogs are lacking physical and mental stimulation and dig because they are just plain bored.

If your dog is digging because you have critters in the yard, find solutions to send them packing. Do not use poisons or other methods that will be hazardous to your pet as well. If your dog is digging because he is hot, provide shaded areas for him, a dog house, or simply allow him inside so he can cool off. Neutering an intact male dog will reduce or eliminate wandering issues. If your dog has separation anxiety or noise phobias, consult with a behavior specialist to resolve the issue. In any case, make sure that your dog has plenty of physical and mental stimulation to keep his body and mind active. A bored dog, especially an unemployed working breed, will give himself a job to do if you don't.

What to do about it:

If you are outside and catch your dog digging, clap your hands to get his attention or give him a cease and desist command and redirect him onto something else more appropriate. Do not punish him for the behavior. Your

dog is doing something that comes naturally to him and he is not being spiteful or bad. Punishment also increases your dog's anxiety, and digging can be an outlet for anxiety, creating a vicious cycle. Five minute training sessions given regularly throughout the week will keep your dog's mind sharp and help with compliance with commands. Dogs need aerobic exercise and off-leash exercise is best if you can arrange it. Always make sure to provide enriching things for your dog to do in the yard such as fun toys to play with and things to chew so he is not left to his own devices.

Put deterrents in the area in which your dog currently digs. If your dog is digging under a fence, attach chicken wire to the bottom of the fence and bury it so your dog will come in contact with it when he digs. You can put balloons that will burst, large rocks, or gravel in holes. If your dog has a favorite location, cover the area temporarily with plastic, wood or a lawn ornament.

Consider providing an appropriate place for your dog to dig. Offer a sandbox or plastic kiddie pool for your dog where he can dig; fill it with sand or dirt. Add some partially buried toys or chew toys to attract him to the area. If you catch your dog digging elsewhere, lead him to this area instead and praise him for digging there.

You can fix your dog's digging issue. All you need is some thought, patience, training, and creativity.

Things to Consider:



Dogs with behavior issues are often working breeds that are unemployed. See if you can find some sort of a training class to appease your dog's natural instincts.



Swimming is a great activity for arthritic dogs.



Bulger Animal Hospital and Essex County Referral Hospital now offer free client lectures!

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Bulger Animal Hospital Presents:



Before Surgery



After Surgery

Tia - Our Featured Pet of the Quarter

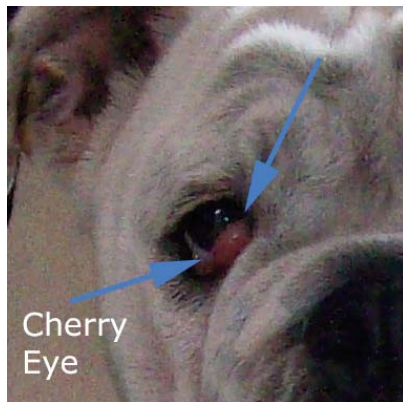
Case summarized by Lindsay Renzullo, DVM

Tia is a six month old English Bulldog who is a patient at Bulger Animal Hospital. At age four months, Tia was rushed to Bulger Animal Hospital by her owners when she developed a large red swelling within the inside corner of her eye.

Tia was diagnosed by her doctor at Bulger with a prolapsed tear gland of the third eyelid, a condition more commonly known as "Cherry Eye." This condition can be seen in a variety of dog breeds but is common in brachycephalic or "smoosh-faced" dogs, such as the bulldog.

In the normal canine eye, tears are produced from two different lacrimal (tear producing) glands. One of these glands is located above the dog's eye and the other is found within the third eyelid. This second gland is very important for producing an adequate amount of tears for the dog's eye, though it can sometimes slip out of place causing a reddened mass in the corner of the eye.

In the past, when this gland prolapsed it was surgically removed.

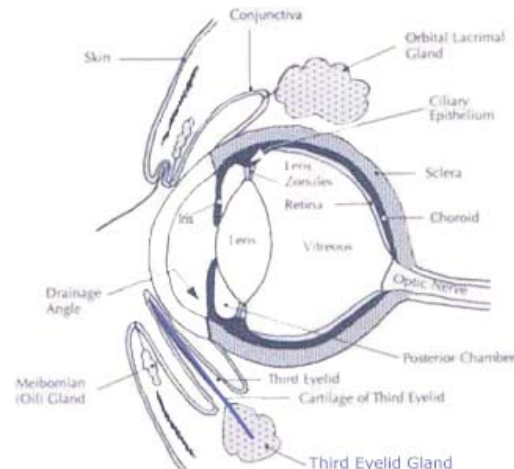


Advancements in veterinary medicine have proven the relative importance of this gland to the overall health of the canine eye. Today surgical treatment to replace the gland is the only approved approach when dealing with this condition.

Surgery was scheduled for Tia to have her gland replaced and to spay her at the same time. Cherry eye surgery is very delicate and requires suturing the gland back into place with special suture patterns and ocular instruments.

Tia's surgery went very well and her cherry eye was replaced with no complications.

It has been three weeks since Tia's surgery and she is doing very well at home. She is one happy healthy bulldog thanks to the doctors at Bulger Animal Hospital.



Side View diagram of a canine eye.

Crested Geckos: A Fun Beginner Reptile

By Kathryn Wrubel, Ph.D.

Crested geckos, named after the double rows of fringed crests that run along their heads and bodies, have become very popular in the reptile trade in the last decade. They are docile, easy to keep and entertaining. Crested geckos have alien-like features such as large eyes (which they keep clean by licking with their tongue), sticky feet and tail tips and prehensile tails. They feel surprisingly soft to the touch, like velvet, and are cool to the touch. Adult crested geckos are 6-9" in total length (this includes their tail which is about half the length of their body). They take about a year to reach full size.

Interestingly, crested geckos were thought to be extinct until 1994 when a large group was found after a storm in the forests on the main island in New Caledonia (a group of islands east of Australia). Crested geckos are arboreal (tree-dwelling) and live in the tree canopy high above the forest floor. They are nocturnal frugivorous (fruit-eating) omnivores that eat a diet consisting of rotting fruit and insects.

Crested geckos are very easy to keep in captivity and readily eat a diet consisting of fruit, baby food and crickets. There are commercial diets made for crested geckos that can be fed instead of baby food. Unlike most reptile species, crested geckos do not need a heat or UV light source. They live at room temperature and like most nocturnal geckos do not require UV light in captivity. Crested geckos make great pets for children and they are one of the only pets you can leave unattended over a weekend. Keep in mind that any reptile can carry salmonella so your children should wash their hands after handling them.

Crested geckos are sweet and comical pets who thrive in captivity. Males develop 2 large bulges at the base of their tail at around 6 months of age, whereas females do not. Crested geckos naturally have beige coloration, but due to selective breeding they now can be found in a range of vibrant colors (oranges, yellows, reds) and patterns (flame, pinstripe, dalmatian). Since they were thought to be extinct, it is not clear how long crested geckos live but estimates are in the 15-20 year range.

Your Reptile & You

Level of Care, Handling, & Temperament: Easy, beginner level. Crested geckos can be very easy to handle once they become accustomed to it and rarely bite. They have a prehensile tail (like opossums) which they may wrap around your hand for stability. Do not frighten your crested gecko or grab them by the tail, as they can drop their tail off as a defense mechanism. The tail will continue to wiggle for several minutes to distract predators while the crested gecko runs away. Crested geckos have a body designed to voluntarily drop their tail. There should be minimal bleeding and there is generally no treatment needed as the tail base will heal on its own. Unlike most

gecko species, if a crested gecko drops its tail it will not grow back. Interestingly most crested geckos in the wild are tailless and they survive just fine without it.

Crested geckos are nocturnal, so during the day they are less active. With handling experience they are very docile. Handle them gently, supporting their whole body in one hand. It is best to let

them walk from hand to hand at first. Crested geckos can leap long distances without warning and can get injured if they fall.

Enclosure: A 20 gallon tall enclosure (glass or screen) works well for an adult crested gecko. Geckos can be kept in groups if they are females, or a male can be kept with females. Male crested geckos may fight and injure each other, or one may dominate the resources in the cage, so it is best to keep males separately. A 29 gallon tank works well for a pair of crested geckos.

Once you get your enclosure, put in some pieces of disinfected wood or climbing vines for your gecko. Also provide some fake plants or ivy for hiding. These are cheapest at craft and hobby stores where people use them for floral arrangements. You can find suction cups with small hooks to attach fake ivy to the sides of the tank at hardware stores (put tape over the end of the hook so your gecko doesn't get scratched by accident). Paper towels can be used for substrate. It is easy to clean, doesn't attract parasites, and crested geckos like to hide in it during the day (fold sheets in halves or thirds). For a more natural enclosure you can use a mixture of potting soil (with no fertilizer) and sand for substrate. Some safe live



Crested Geckos... *continued*

plants to put in a natural terrarium include pothos, dracena, and ficus. Provide your gecko with a shallow water dish. The cage should be misted with a spray bottle at least once daily to help your gecko shed and provide the proper humidity. Mist younger geckos twice daily as they shed more often and can get shed stuck on their toes or tail tips.

Crested geckos do not need UV light or a heat source as long as room temperature is between 72 and 78 degrees. You can provide a low wattage nocturnal viewing light at night if temperatures drop below 70 degrees. These can be purchased at pet stores and are red light bulbs (wavelengths that won't disturb the geckos at night). Make sure to keep a thermometer in the cage if you use any light source so you can see if it gets too hot. Crested geckos cannot tolerate temperatures above 85 degrees for long periods of time.

Since your gecko will climb on the walls of the enclosure, sometimes you will need to clean the walls if they get messy. Mist the aquarium down with a spray bottle full of water then wipe the sides clean with paper towel. Harder to remove messes can be easily detached from the glass using a razor blade. Remove your gecko from the enclosure if you are planning on doing this, of course.

Feeding: Feed your crested gecko in the evening so food is fresh while he or she is awake. Fruit baby food (apricot, peach, banana, mango) should be provided in small amounts at least three days per week. Adults eat a quarter-sized dollop and babies will eat a dime-sized dollop or less. Food-processed fresh fruit can be used if you prefer. Chicken or turkey baby food can be mixed in with the fruit baby



food once a week (1 part meat to 3 parts fruit). Crested geckos eat very small amounts and you should notice little imprints in the food the next day. Remove any leftover food the next day or it will spoil.

Feed your crested gecko 3-5 size-appropriate live crickets (no larger than the width of the gecko's head) a couple of days per week. Baby food and crickets must be dusted with calcium and multivitamin supplements three days per week (this is necessary for your crested gecko to stay

healthy and strong). Rep-Cal® calcium supplement and Herpivite® multivitamin supplement can be added in equal portions according to the instructions on the containers. If you prefer, you can also feed your crested gecko a commercial crested gecko diet instead of baby food which is a powder you mix with water (these diets contain the vitamins your gecko needs). If you feed a commercial diet you should still feed your gecko crickets. Adult crested geckos should be fed at least five days per week and younger crested geckos should eat at least six days per week.



Health: Crested geckos are prone to Metabolic Bone Disease which can occur without proper vitamin and calcium supplementation. Signs of metabolic bone disease, which can occur rapidly in crested geckos, include a rubbery bottom jaw, a crooked mouth, a shaky walk, and tremors. If your crested gecko has any of these symptoms, he or she should be seen by a veterinarian immediately. Crested geckos have calcium sacs in the roof of their mouth that your veterinarian can assess for calcium reserves.

Crested geckos are also prone to Floppy Tail Syndrome, which causes the tail to hang in a 90 degree angle over the body when the gecko is upside down. You will often observe an indentation in the tail base and the tail will curve off to one side at the base. Geckos with floppy tail syndrome still maintain the use of their prehensile tail and use their tail for balancing. The cause of this syndrome is unknown but it is not thought to be due to a nutritional deficiency. It is not reversible.

Another common ailment seen in crested geckos is retained shed sticking to their toes and tail tips. If the proper humidity is not provided in the enclosure and the shed is not manually and carefully removed, the toe tips or tail tip may lose blood flow and become amputated.

Enjoy Your New Addition! Crested geckos are fun beginner reptiles that don't require a fortune to set up and keep. They are sturdy animals that can be a good pet for older children and they make great pets for apartment dwellers, busy people and people looking for something "a little different".

Pet Owner Lecture Series

Are you a pet owner with questions about your pet? If you are, perhaps you would be interested in signing up for one of our free upcoming one-hour pet owner lectures.

Dates and times are listed below. Go to our website for more information and to register to attend.

www.InTownVet.com/InTown/2009ClientEd.html

Upcoming topics include:

Nov. 10, 2009: Frisky Felines, Scaredy Cats, & Cranky Kitties: Keeping the Peace in Multi-Cat Households

This lecture will go over the basics of cat behavior and managing multi-cat households. Beginning with introducing a new cat and covering issues such as house soiling, inter-cat aggression, territorial marking, furniture scratching and redirected aggression, this lecture will cover a myriad of feline behavior issues. Tips for resolving some of these issues will also be discussed. Background measures such as enrichment and exercise will also be covered.

Dec. 8, 2009: Tenacious Toys: Raising a Tiny Dog in a Big Big World

Toy dogs are special breeds: if you have a big dog in a little dog's body, this class is for you. Different toy breeds will be discussed and tips on training, management, safety and enrichment will be provided.

Jan. 12, 2010: Keeping the Peace with Dogs and Kids - What You Need to Know When You're Expecting & About Kids and Dogs Living Together

If you are expecting a new baby or already have some young ones running around the house, this class is for you! Learn how to prepare your dog for a new baby's arrival, how to introduce them, and how your dog and baby can co-exist safely together. This class will cover the basics of keeping toddlers, children and your dog comfortable and happy together.

March 10, 2010: What You Need to Know About Dogs Now to Prevent Behavior Issues in the Future

This lecture will cover the basics on what your dog needs to thrive in the human world. Topics covered will include the basics on socialization, enrichment, exercise, training and leadership that every owner should know.

