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Canine Tetanus

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While tetanus in dogs is not uncommon, the average practitioner probably sees only a few cases during his lifetime.

On November 12, a client brought a three year old mixed terrier to the hospital with the following history: Two or three days previously the dog began to go off feed and grow stiff. It was showing typical tetanus symptoms, with the characteristic rolling of the membrana nictitans when his head was moved upwards. The ears were erect and the tail held out stiffly behind. A diagnosis of tetanus was made.

The dog was given 15,000 units of antitoxin subcutaneously and 5 c.c. of Nembutal intravenously. The Nembutal relaxed the patient for about fourteen hours when rigidity of the muscles returned, and the patient stood in the kennel with all four feet braced out laterally. Since the tetanic spasms were still more pronounced, 6.5 c.c. of Nembutal were given together with 20 c.c. of 50% Dextrose intravenously, 5,000 units of antitoxin intraspinaly and 5,000 units subcutaneously. This time the effect of the Nembutal lasted only nine hours. No further administration of antitoxin was deemed advisable as the patient grew steadily worse.

Nembutal, Dextrose, and Normal Saline were then given at various intervals; but, by four days after the patient had entered the hospital, 10 c.c. of Nembutal would relax him for only an hour. Death followed an injection of Nembutal and Dextrose on the fifth day.

The photographs were taken in the hospital on the second day, twenty-four hours after 15,000 units of antitoxin had been given.

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