Electrical Shock

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Puppies, by nature, like to chew on objects. Unfortunately, many households have a number of electrical cords which may be readily accessible to chewing pets. If a puppy chews a cord that is connected to an electrical socket, the puppy may receive a severe electrical shock.

What are the symptoms?

If a puppy chews through the rubber coating of an electrical cord, it will receive a severe shock as its teeth come in contact with the inner wires. The dog will cry out when it becomes 'shocked.' Additionally, the mouth may have received a severe burn, especially the roof and tongue areas. Following the burn, the affected areas will become red and irritated. This may take several days as the burned tissue dies and is sloughed off. In more severe instances, the electrical current may travel into the dog's body and cause damage to the lungs as well.

The damaged lungs generally fill with fluid (edema) within several days following the electrical shock. Puppies with damaged lungs from an electrical shock will have a difficult time breathing and may die if left untreated.

What are the risks?

Electrical shocks are always unpleasant and potentially life threatening. Any puppy receiving a shock should be monitored closely for several days for signs of burning and/or lung damage.

What is the management?

Prevention is the best. If possible, do not leave cords exposed. Encase cords in plastic tubing (PVC pipe) when possible. There are 'pet proof' cords available which will protect the puppy from shock if the puppy does chew the cord. Additionally, bitter substances such as Chew Stop and Bitter Apple can be sprayed on cords to discourage chewing. Unplug all accessible cords if the puppy is left unsupervised (we recommend puppies be confined in a crate if they are not under direct supervision).

Summary

Puppies that have received a shock must be monitored closely. Various medications are available to veterinarians to help manage lung and burn damage if present. In all cases of suspected electrical shock, consult your veterinarian. Proper management will be determined by the extent or severity of the shock. The authors would like to mention that children are also at risk of electrical shock from chewing electrical cords.

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