

Puppy Sepsis

by Michael P Genovese DDS

I was reading an article in an old wolfhound magazine from 1975. The article talked about a grave medical condition they called, "Joint Ill" and even went so far as to rename it, "Joint Evil". This condition we see today. It is called "Puppy Sepsis" these days.

Unfortunately, I have experience with this disease. Its onset is quick and the disease is very sinister in nature because its symptoms point away from what it really is. If those symptoms are treated, it just makes things worse and can be fatal.

Here is the story. I had a litter of 12 very active cantankerous puppies. Climbing over pens, getting into whatever they could, eating anything not nailed down. A smile a minute, you get the picture. Normal 10 week old pups.

At 3 am, we hear a loud scream coming from one pup. Then nothing and all seems ok. At breakfast we noted one puppy favoring a forelimb. We just thought that it was from rough play. Later that day we took the puppy to the vet and had it evaluated. The puppy was in obvious pain. The vet thought as we did that she had injured herself in her shoulder. The clinical exam pointed to an injury. She was given analgesics, and 4 or 5 hours later things were not getting any better. The vet was called and they said to up the analgesics. Watching the puppy, made you think it must have really tore something. X-rays were negative, no temp.

After we upped the analgesics the puppy seemed to settle down. She died a few hours later.

We had an autopsy done and it was found to be sepsis that had localized itself in her joints. The etiology of this condition is thought to be from a skin puncture. Our breed is very stoic, and by the time we see things demonstrated as frank symptoms the disease process is pretty far along.

My recommendation for our membership would be to have your vet evaluate a pup who is demonstrating symptoms from an injury, for possible sepsis. If you see things deteriorating quickly, I would have your vet get a broad spectrum antibiotic on board, preferably intramuscularly. I would also not recommend any steroids initially. If you can see frank swelling in a hock, etc., I would definitely go the antibiotic route. Our puppies will not die from an injury but will from being septic. Our first thought when seeing a swollen hock/joint in a pup would be an injury, treating a septic joint with steroids would be disastrous. Your vet needs to know of this disease and how rapidly it acts. They are more than willing to cover all bases in this realm. We had another littermate have a hock swell up the size of a golf ball in a 4 hour period. The vet was on that quickly and covered all the bases and the pup was fine.

Remember, you know your hounds. Developing a repartee with your vet is paramount. Vets do not see IW's that much. They are very interested in our breed and want to learn as much as they can about them.

Thank you,

Michael P Genovese DDS