

Grass Seeds

Grass seeds are surprisingly a fairly big cause of admissions to many veterinary hospitals in the spring and summer months. Dry sunny spells see a greater number of seeds falling to the ground, where they can work their way into the hair of a dog's paw, ears, armpits, tail or skin. They can work their way through a dog's soft tissue too, tracking to different places around the body.

Grass seeds vary in size, but they are similar to mini darts with fine hairs and a sharp point at one end. The sharp point can easily pierce the thin skin between a dogs paws, and can become quite sore.



How can I tell that my dog has been affected by grass seeds?

Your dog may shake its head and vigorously lick its paws. They may also look uncomfortable, lethargic and be in a lot of pain. If you notice any of the above signs, especially head-shaking, paw-licking or any other abnormality please contact your vet immediately. Grass seeds can continue to migrate from your dog's paw and travel a considerable way if not found.

Here are some of the symptoms you may see in the most common locations:

Grass seeds in dog's ears

- Head shaking
- Redness and painful to touch
- Holding the head to one side
- Loss of balance

Grass seeds in dog's eye

- Swollen, red eye
- Excessive tear production
- Rubbing the eye

Grass seeds in dog's paw

- Licking at the toes
- Red, swollen area on the foot and between toes
- Limping or holding the leg up

Grass seeds in dog's nose

- Repeated sneezing
- Bloody discharge from nostril
- Rubbing face on the ground
- Difficulty breathing

Grass seeds in dog's skin

- Swollen, red lump, with blood or pus
- Dog licking continually at site
- Grass seed sticking out from the skin

Grass seeds in dog's genitalia

- Licking at the site
- Difficulty peeing
- Blood in urine
- Redness and swelling



Treatment for grass seed wounds in dogs

The best way to prevent injury from grass seed in dogs is to find and remove them as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, however, removal is not always straightforward. It is likely your vet will carry out a full physical examination of your pet to confirm the diagnosis before removing the offending seed. If it's close to the surface of the skin and easily accessible they may use a specially-designed pair of tweezers to do this.

If your vet suspects a grass seed is lodged too deeply, is in a particularly sensitive area, or there is pus or blood oozing out of a wound, they may need to sedate your dog. If a grass seed is thought to be the source of pain or infection but cannot be found, advanced imaging and surgical exploration may be necessary and in some circumstances your dog may need to be referred to a specialist for this.

Prevention and prognosis for grass seeds in dogs

Avoid the long grass in the warmer months. Keep your garden tidy. Check your dog thoroughly after a walk, by running your fingers through their fur and checking inside the ears, in between the toes, and in the mouth and eyes.

You should also try to ensure your dog is well-groomed, especially in breeds with longer hair. The main threat to your dog's health from grass seeds is when they penetrate the skin, enter the lungs, or burrow themselves into the body and can track to different places.



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