

Veterinary Fact Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions - Wounds

1. How do wounds occur?

Wounds occur most commonly by trauma. Wounds result when there is damage to the skin (a protective layer) of the greyhound, which then allows bacteria to enter, causing inflammation and may cause local and systemic infection. Greyhounds are prone to wounds as their layers of skin are thinner and have little fat under the skin compared to other breeds of dog and therefore tears easily.

2. What do I do when I see a wound on my greyhound?

The primary aim of wound management is to achieve healing as quickly as possible so as minimize pain, prevent infection and restore normal function.

The first step is to safely remove the greyhound from the source of the wound to prevent further injury. This is followed by assessing the severity of the wound. Veterinary attention should be sought if you observe one or more of the criteria listed in the next question - ***When should I refer to a veterinarian?***

If veterinary attention is not immediately available, then the initial aim is to provide basic first aid until you can get to a veterinarian. If the wound does not fit any of the criteria required for veterinary attention, then first aid can be provided and the wound appropriately managed, provided it continues to improve and none of those criteria develop. ***See First Aid for Wounds on the next page.***

3. When should I refer to a veterinarian?

You should always seek veterinary attention if there is one or more of the following:

- significant bleeding or discharge
- the size of the wound is greater than a 50-cent coin
- the depth of the wound is one or more muscle layers
- if the tissue around the wound is darkened
- if the wound is contaminated
- if the wound is painful to touch
- if bone or ligament is exposed
- if located over a highly mobile area such as an elbow, toe or tail

If the wound did not initially satisfy any of the above criteria, you should also seek veterinary attention if the wound:

- changes in colour
- increases in size
- develops an odour
- develops a discharge
- becomes painful
- has not improved in condition within 3 days

4. Would my greyhound be in pain?

Yes, there would always be pain experienced with this trauma although there will be variable degrees of pain depending on the severity of the trauma. The degree of pain is dependent upon the location, severity and size of the wound and the length of time since the injury occurred.

Pain is the unpleasant sensation or experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. Pain from cuts usually develops within an hour of the injury. Pain can occur as a direct result of the cut or laceration in the skin, from the subsequent inflammation or from the impairment of normal blood supply to the area. While there may be variable degrees of pain depending on the severity of the trauma, it is nonetheless unnecessary pain and discomfort for the greyhound and may require pain relief medication prescribed by your veterinarian.

5. How can I prevent wounds from occurring?

Some of these suggestions may be useful if you believe your greyhound is at risk of or has a history of acquiring wounds:

- If wounds develop regularly at home, review the environment by identifying and where possible removing (or protecting) any object or structure that could be contributing to the wound such as sharp or protruding surfaces.
- If you suspect the wounds developed due to bites or scratches from other greyhounds in your kennel, ensure they are separated from one another.
- If wounds develop from constantly hitting hard surfaces (e.g. tail hitting kennel wall) then consider relocating the greyhound to a larger kennel.
- If wounds develop from rubbing or repeated pressure, then consider adding softer bedding and using supportive aides to protect the area.
- If you notice your greyhound gets injuries inconsistent with the level of trauma received, then there may be an underlying health issue that you will need to review with your veterinarian (e.g. if you noticed a large wound developed from bumping a smooth wall).

6. First Aid for Wounds

First aid is the immediate treatment of an injured or sick animal, as a short-term measure before veterinary attention can be sought. The aims of first aid include preserving life, to prevent suffering, to prevent the situation from deteriorating and to promote recovery.

Basic wound first aid:

- i. Flush the wound with plenty of warm, sterile saline.
- ii. Cover the wound with a sterile, nonstick dressing (e.g. Melolin®).
- iii. Wrap the nonstick dressing with medical grade padding (e.g. Soffban®) followed by bandaging (e.g. Vetwrap®).
- iv. Check the wound every two days or sooner if the dressing or bandage looks dirty, feels wet, or if there is a foul odour.
- v. If the wound looks infected, has an odour, deteriorates, or does not seem to be healing, then seek veterinary attention as soon as possible.

7. Do wounds need antibiotics?

Not all wounds require antibiotics. If a fresh wound is cleaned/flushed as described in the **First Aid for Wounds** section and kept clean and dry with an appropriate bandage that is changed as required, it may not require antibiotics.

If a wound appears swollen, inflamed or painful, or you can see a discharge or smell an odour, you should consult your veterinarian. The veterinarian will assess the wound and may or may not prescribe antibiotics based on their expert opinion and knowledge of antibiotic prescribing guidelines.

Antibiotics should only be given if prescribed by your veterinarian for the wound in the affected greyhound. You should not give leftover antibiotics from a previous illness or injury, or from another dog. Always follow the instructions on the prescription label and complete the full course of antibiotics.

For information on caring for a bandage at home, refer to:

- Veterinary Fact Sheet – *Bandaging Aftercare Information*