

COST OF TREATMENT

This will vary greatly between cases and depend on the extent of care that your dog requires. It is possible that what initially appears a minor procedure can develop into a major operation.

Even removal of a grass seed from an ear or eye will often require at least a sedation to perform this safely. General anaesthetics will be necessary for surgical exploration of swellings, with the risk that several procedures may be required to resolve the problem.

Some grass seeds will need the use of endoscopes and specialist equipment to retrieve them.

The vet will be able to estimate the costs involved for you before arranging the procedure. However, please be aware that it may be necessary to contact you while your pet is with us if we need to alter the treatment plan.

Weymouth Surgery

Unit D1 Link park
Chickerell link road
Weymouth
Dorset
DT3 4FL

01305 784197

Dorchester Surgery

86 Mellstock Avenue
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 2BH

01305 251632

www.davecumbervets.co.uk



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GRASS SEEDS



GRASS SEEDS - THE SUMMER MENACE

Every year, from June until late Autumn, we treat a lot of dogs with problems related to grass seeds. Grass seeds (grass awns) are difficult to avoid and pose a threat to the health of your dog in a number of ways:

- Working their way into the skin from the fur, causing swelling and infection. Between the toes is the most common site.
- Lodging deep in your dog's ear canal.
- Being sniffed up into the nasal passage.
- Being swallowed and causing a swelling in your dog's neck.
- Being inhaled, working their way down the airways and into the lungs.
- Becoming trapped under the eyelid.

On occasions, grass seeds can work their way internally and cause serious, life-threatening illnesses. These cases are fortunately rare.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING GRASS SEEDS

- Check your dog's feet after each walk. Grass seeds will work their way up between the toes and into the skin at the top of the webbing where there is a small pocket of skin.
- Check the fur around the opening of the ears.
- Dogs with long coats are particularly at risk. Consider having fur around feet, ears and belly clipped short in the summer.
- Avoid running your dog through fields with long grass.
- Discourage your dog from chewing grass.



Please contact the surgery if you notice any of the following symptoms that could suggest a grass seed:

- Painful swellings appearing between the toes.
- Any other painful swelling under the skin.
- Any unexplained wounds with a discharge of pus.
- Sudden onset of head shaking or scratching at an ear.
- Sudden onset sneezing or coughing.
- Breathing difficulties.
- A sore and discharging eye.
- General signs of illness such as not eating and sleeping more.

TREATMENT OF GRASS SEEDS

Grass awns will cause intense inflammation and infection resulting in scar tissue and cavities full of pus. These 'foreign body reactions' are painful and can only be resolved by finding and removing the grass awn. Surgical exploration of these swellings is often performed under general anaesthetic by cutting over the lump and probing until a grass seed can be found. This is sometimes straight-forward but often complicated by a number of factors:

- The swellings consist of a number of indistinct cavities that extend into the surrounding flesh.
- The grass awn is rarely in the centre of the swelling
- Scar tissue around the grass seed can make it very difficult to identify.
- The grass awn may have tracked away from the swelling completely and will not be apparent until a new swelling appears.
- It is possible that the swelling is actually caused by something else with the same appearance.
- Some swellings involve major blood vessels and nerves. This is particularly true of swellings in the neck region.
- Some swellings will contain more than one grass seed or the grass seed may have broken into pieces.

Although it can be very frustrating, it is not uncommon that a grass seed cannot be found where one was strongly suspected. The wounds are purposely left open (bandaged if necessary) to allow drainage. Some swellings will resolve but others will need to be explored a second, or possibly third time before a grass seed can be found.