



Education Newsletter

2023 Edition 1, February 24, 2023, BARRC Education Committee

At last, a long overdue newsletter is out. This editor fell into a vast void where sitting down to write or edit or even entering my office became an overwhelming effort. The only thing that has gotten me out of it has been wonderful contributions by Miles Rodgers II, DVM and Penny Mallen. Miles recently attended a webinar on Virbac's new mast cell tumor (MCT) treatment and has provided an overview of this promising new approach. Penny is hosting an educational Rattlesnake aversion training in July which has prompted a recap of why this kind of training is important for Ridgeback owners. Thanks so much Miles and Penny! - Wendy Peirce, Editor and Chair, Education Committee

New Treatment for Canine Mast Cell Tumors

By Miles Rodgers II, DVM

Mast cell tumors (MCTs) have long been a bane for Rhodesian Ridgebacks. Virbac has released a new drug, Stelfonta (tigilanol tiglate injection), which shows promise for canine mast cell tumor treatment. It was developed in Australia and is a derivative of the bushwood plant.

Stelfonta is not considered to be chemotherapy and can be administered in a general practice. It is injected directly into the tumor with a small gauge needle. The medication causes destruction of the blood supply to the tumor which causes it to slough off over 4 to 7 days. The open wound typically does not need to be covered and heals in within 28 to 42 days with a good cosmetic outcome.

Per the manufacturer, an Elizabethan collar to protect the MCT site from the dog licking it is not usually needed. Mild sedation may be needed for the injection. A major benefit is that general anesthesia is not needed as with surgical removal.

A single treatment is 75% effective. If there is recurrence, effectiveness is 87% after a second treatment. Cost may be comparable to tumor removal surgery at a general practice.

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Prescribing information



Shaping the future of animal health

Tumor destruction and healing typically between 4-6 weeks*.



Pre STELFONTA



2 hours after STELFONTA



Day 4



Day 6



Day 11



Day 15



Day 24



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New Treatment for Canine MCTs, continued from page 1

Considerations prior to treatment with Stelfonta include: tumor location, volume and ulceration along with patient stage of disease; patient concurrent medications, concurrent disease and temperament; owner ability to administer concomitant medications and comfort with wound management.

Stelfonta Treatment Pros:

1. Can be used in dogs that are general anesthetic risks.
2. Does not require seeing a specialist.
3. Elizabethan collar usually not needed

Stelfonta Treatment Cons:

1. Only one tumor up to 10 cubic centimeters (about 1.5" X 1.5" X 1.5") can be treated per treatment cycle.
2. Cannot be used on raw/ulcerated tumors as the medication seeps out
3. Owner MUST be able to give oral medications for a 10 day period to prevent a possible severe reaction as histamine is released from the MCT cells as they break down. If your dog cannot be medicated or spits the pills out afterwards it is not a candidate for this treatment.

For further information, visit [Stelfonta.com](https://www.stelfonta.com). Susan Ettinger, DVM, a veterinary oncologist, also has great YouTube videos on MCT treatment. Search for Stelfonta on YouTube and her videos are listed under Dr. Sue Cancer Vet. As in all cases, consult with your own veterinarian for your dog's suitability for this new treatment.

Ridgebacks and Rattlers

Avoiding the Fangs

The only venomous snakes in California are eight species of rattlesnakes, with the most common in Northern California being the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes can be found in rural areas as well as suburban areas where there is sufficient natural habitat. In Northern California snakes will hibernate during cold months and are active March through September. In Southern California they are active all year round.

A snake bite can be fatal to even a large dog, like our Ridgebacks. Dogs are 20 times more likely than humans to be bitten by a venomous snake and 25 times more likely to die from a bite, according to the Animal Medical Center of Southern California. When a dog encounters a rattler, they are most often bitten in the face or the extremities. Unlike some venomous snakes that stay attached when they bite, rattlesnakes release venom into their victim and then let go while they wait for the prey to die. Most rattlesnake venom is made up of toxic enzymes

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Northern Pacific Rattlesnake - picture by Michael Marchiano

Quick action saves Thor



Justin Jefferys and Thor. Picture: Lindsay Muskat

THE Jefferys family of Warwick moved into immediate action after a snake bit Thor, the family dog.
Justin Jefferys said the incident occurred when his three-year-old Rhodesian ridgeback was wandering around a work area in Jandakot.
"When I was driving home he started behaving strangely and at home he became disorientated and wobbly on his feet so we took him straight to the vet," Mr. Jefferys said.
A urine test confirmed that a dog bite had bitten the dog and a course of antivenom and intravenous fluids enabled Thor to make a complete recovery.
"It was a frightening thing and we're very thankful it all worked out," Mr. Jefferys said. "The key is to watch out for

swamps, heavy grass and water areas. That's where snakes live."
Vetwest Animal Hospitals veterinarian Dr. Craig Challen said clearing backyards of long grass and removing rubbish piles could reduce the number of hiding spots for snakes around the home.
"Dogs are inquisitive by nature, so put them on a leash when exercising them in bushland or near beach dunes during the warmer months," Dr. Challen said.
Common signs suggesting snakebites include sudden weakness followed by collapse, shaking or twitching of muscles and vomiting.
Dr. Challen said if pet owners suspect snakebites, they should go to their nearest veterinarian immediately.

Vetwest - Western Australia



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that cause changes in blood cells, prevents blood from clotting, and damage blood vessels, causing them to leak. These changes can lead to internal bleeding and to heart, respiratory, and kidney failure. An exception is the Mojave green rattlesnake whose venom causes rapid paralysis, including respiratory muscles, and suffocation.

All snake bites are not equal. The seriousness of a rattlesnake bite to a dog depends on many factors. The size of the dog and where it was bitten makes a difference. The efficacy of the venom depends not only on the type of snake but on the season, the geographical region, the age of the snake, and how recently it has released venom previously. Approximately 40% of all bites are serious and may cause permanent damage with an additional 5% being fatal, even with treatment. Rattlesnake bites require immediate attention by a veterinarian. Mojave green bites are most often fatal to dogs.

Many people who live or spend time in rattlesnake country with their Ridgebacks will have them vaccinated against rattlesnake venom using a vaccine from Red Rock Biologics. Controlled testing of this vaccine has not been done on dogs and there is some controversy as to its effectiveness. A more reliable approach to ensure your dog isn't impacted by a rattler bite may be to teach your dog to avoid the snake before a bite happens. Rattlesnake Aversion or Avoidance training can be very effective.

Fred Presson, a professional dog trainer from High On Kennels, teaches Rattlesnake Avoidance classes throughout California. He has found the best way to teach a dog to avoid rattlesnakes is to use live rattlesnake specimens that have been neutralized so that they cannot bite. The snakes are placed out in a field setting and the dogs are fitted with an electronic training collar, the dog is led through the field and allowed to encounter the rattlesnakes at which point the dog is stimulated using the electronic collar. The process is repeated several times to ensure that the dog understands the sight, sound and smell of a rattlesnake. Some dogs seem to forget over a period of time and annual training for all dogs is recommended. Training early in the year is recommended as rattlesnakes become active as the weather warms up in the spring. The training is relatively quick – less than an hour. If your dog doesn't get it right away, the dog is worked with until it understands and is avoiding the snakes. Presson cautions that anyone teaching a rattlesnake avoidance class should have significant dog training experience, know how to correctly use e-collars without stress to the dog, and train with live rattlesnakes as they have a distinctive odor from other snakes. Check out the Rattlesnake Aversion session hosted at BARRC member Penny Mallen's this July!



All Breed Rattlesnake Aversion Training for Dogs

*Train your dog to detect and avoid rattlesnakes. It could save a life.
Essential for dogs that hike!
One-on-one training.*

Trainer: Fred Presson
High On Kennels
www.highonkennels.com

When: July 22 – 23, 2023

Where: Private Residence
Napa
Penny Mallen's
1180 Shady Oaks Dr
Napa, CA 94558-1112

Cost: \$95.00 per dog

Enroll:
<https://rattlesnakeclinic.as.me>

For Questions Contact:
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References – Ridgebacks & Rattlers:

1. Mar Vista Animal Medical Center, www.marvistavet.com/rattlesnake-bites-in-california.pml
2. Ramirez, Ken, "Snake Avoidance – A Positive Reinforcement Approach", Oct. 5, 2020
3. Clinic of Gold Canyon, <https://www.goldcanyonvet.com/site/blog/2021/05/20/rattlesnake-bites-dogs>