



**NEUROLOGY:
DIAGNOSING & TREATING “COONHOUND PARALYSIS”**

**What is Coonhound
Paralysis?**

Acute Idiopathic Polyradiculoneuritis (a.k.a. Coonhound Paralysis) is an immune-mediated disease in hunting dogs that have been exposed to raccoon saliva. However, this condition has also been observed in dogs with no raccoon exposure. The ventral (motor) nerve roots and spinal nerves are primarily affected.

What are the symptoms?

Neurological signs develop one to two weeks after raccoon exposure. There is generally an ascending weakness that initially affects the back legs and involves the front limbs within one to two days. Also present is muscle atrophy. The spinal reflexes are weak or absent. Skin hyperesthesia may occasionally be present and the dog's bark may be weak and respiratory paralysis may develop. There is no fever and mentation, behavior, swallowing, defecation, urination and tail mobility are normal. Megaesophagus is not a feature of this disease. Tick paralysis and botulism should be included as differential diagnoses. Coonhound Paralysis is suspected in the absence of ticks and lack of exposure to botulinum toxin. CSF analysis is characterized by an increase in protein concentration and normal cell count. Results of electromyographic studies and nerve conduction velocities are useful adjuncts in the diagnosis of this condition.

Treatment

The use of glucocorticosteroids in the treatment of Coonhound Paralysis is controversial. Supportive care consists of nursing, nutritional support, physical therapy to minimize muscle atrophy, and prevention of pneumonia, urinary tract infections and decubital ulcers. Most dogs regain adequate or normal neurological function within three to six weeks.

Expert:

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Dr. Bichsel hails from Switzerland where he completed his internship at The University of Bern and received his D.V.M. from Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Bichsel completed his residency at the University of Georgia and is treating patients at Michigan Veterinary Specialists.

Questions?

Dr. Pierre Bichsel is a full-time staff member at Michigan Veterinary Specialists. He is available for questions and consultations on neurological conditions and is on-call, along with MVS surgeons, for neurological cases requiring emergency surgical intervention. Dr. Bichsel sees appointments at both MVS locations. Contact Dr. Bichsel at (248) 354-6660.

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