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"Max" - Police dog eating tough grass



Max

Max earns his keep in to-day's world. A highly trained police dog he is used to locate illegal drugs and weapons. Just like many other full time operatives he is allowed some time off for recreational pursuits.

His handler however didn't anticipate the near fatal outcome which occurred when he ate some grass.

By grass I mean the stuff that grows widespread throughout the common and not the marijuana variety!

Up until last week I had always reassured many owners, for it is a common enquiry, that allowing your pet dog to graze grass does no harm. It is my opinion that dogs must derive some pleasure from this experience or they simply wouldn't bother.

Often, but not always, the grass consumed is then regurgitated, probably due to irritation of the gastric mucosa by the fibrous ball which remains after mastication. The domestic dog, just like his ancestors, is designed to vomit very easily. This process acts as a safety mechanism due to their scavenging nature allowing them to rid themselves of any decomposed material which could be hazardous.

Some people believe, mistakenly I think, that dogs eat grass as method of making themselves sick. The notion that dogs are capable of self medication in an effort to purge is unlikely.

Max decided one day that he would have a particularly good portion of grass. Rather than being sick at this point the fibrous remains formed into a large mass which sank to the pit of his stomach.

Small strands from the fibrous ball started to be digested and moved through into the small intestine. Unfortunately, the large mass remaining was unable to follow and acted as an anchor. A tug of war began between his stomach and his small bowel. The small intestine whilst labouring extremely hard was unable to dislodge the fibrous ball of grass.

Just like a thin rope cutting through your hand when pulling, the tough strand of grass began slicing through Max's bowel.....not a pleasant experience at all.

Fortunately, I was able to diagnose the problem with x-rays and after several hours of surgery the offending material was removed through several surgical incisions. Luckily for Max, and unluckily for the criminal fraternity, he is well on the road to recovery although I gather he is considering a different recreational pastime!

Terry Dunne BVMS, Cert SAO, MRCVS

This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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