



# **How to Treat Bee Stings in Dogs**

Knowing what to do if your dog has a severe reaction to a sting may save your best friend's life.

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## How to Treat Bee Stings in Dogs:

Knowing what to do if your dog has a severe reaction to a sting may save your best friend's life.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A big thank you to Betty Blue, our foster dog. Because of you, Betty, I've learned a lot about bee stings and allergic reactions and can share this knowledge to help other dogs.

I love you, Betty!



# Introduction

*The content provided in this e-book is written for informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of a veterinarian.*



I live in Iowa. And after a long winter of snow, ice and frigid temperatures, I am always excited to welcome the return of petunias in flower boxes and long hours of daylight. But these harbingers of spring also mean the bees and wasps are back. Hats off to those of you in the warmer climates who deal with the threat of bee stings in dogs all year round!

In addition to writing books on dog health, I also have a web site, [dog-health-today.com](http://dog-health-today.com), with information on dog illnesses. Traffic statistics for this web site indicate that many folks are looking for information on treating bee stings in dogs twelve months of the year, but I see a big burst in activity during summer months in the Midwest. The best way to ensure that your dog has a successful recovery from a sting is to be prepared.

In this e-booklet, you'll learn:

- How to tell if your dog is having an allergic reaction to a bee or wasp sting and how to determine if it is mild, moderate or severe
- What action you should take if you believe your dog has been stung
- Conventional and homeopathic treatments for stings

After reading this e-book carefully, I hope you are persuaded to purchase your bee sting treatment of choice *before* your dog needs it. Take the treatment with you when you take your dog hiking or to the dog park. On the other hand, minor reactions, if treated quickly, typically resolve with home remedies, often aborting a crisis.

# Chapter 1

## *The ABCs of Bees*

### *(and Wasps too!)*

While there are nearly 3,500 species of bees in North America, they can all be characterized as either solitary or social. Solitary bees build their own nests without help from other bees. They rarely sting people. Social bees, including honey bees and bumble bees, build their nest together and live as a colony. Social bees sting, usually when they feel their nest is threatened.

When a bee stings, the stinger detaches from the bee and it dies. As the bee stings, it releases a scent that serves as a bugle call for other bees to come and attack the enemy. If your dog is stung, remove him from the area as quickly as possible.

A bee's stinger is barbed and it usually remains in the skin. The stinger contains venom, so the sooner you find and remove it, the less venom entering your dog's body. The most common places where a dog will be stung is on the head and feet.

Authorities on bees and wasps advise leaving the insects alone because they provide benefits (honey bees pollenate and wasps feed on many pests, including mosquitoes). They are more likely to flee from you than sting you, with the exception of feeling that the colony nest is threatened or if they are disturbed while foraging for food.

### **A Word about Wasps**

A female wasp has the ability to sting; a male wasp does not. A wasp will not sting unless threatened—for instance, your

dog pokes his nose at the wasp or you “shoo” her away, arms and hands flailing. A wasp can sting multiple times because unlike the bee, its stinger is not left in the skin of its victim.

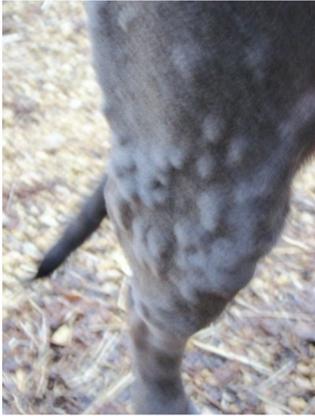
“Yellowjacket” refers to a variety of species of wasps. These wasps can be especially aggressive when defending a nest. Their short-tempered disposition becomes even more blatant as the summer wears on, the colony of wasps grows and the food supply dwindles. By late summer or early fall, yellowjackets will aggressively pursue food, especially sweet carbohydrates, at picnics, garbage cans and fruit trees.

While I agree that wasps contribute to the natural balance of things, there are times when you have to take action to remove them. If they build a nest under the eaves of your house, close to a door or become a threat in another way, you may need to resort to destroying the nest and/or the insects themselves. At our house, wasps like to build nests on the ceiling of our unenclosed porch. We have used EcoSmart Organic Wasp and Hornet Spray on the nest (be sure and follow instructions to avoid getting stung). We have also had good luck using wasp traps as well.

In Iowa there are at least three species of wasps that build their nest in the ground. These are known as digger wasps. Because of this nesting habit, it is really important that I “patrol the yard” on a regular basis to see if there is a flurry of noticeable wasp activity in a given area, including under the porch. Since this e-book is available on the Internet, that means readers can live anywhere in the world. It’s important that you research and are familiar with the types of bees and wasps in your area, and with their nest-building habits. This will help you be proactive in keeping your dog from getting stung.

## Chapter 2

# *Learn the Signs of an Allergic Reaction*



Hives and rash are both signs of an allergic reaction.

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Bee stings in dogs are usually not life-threatening. However, some dogs will have a severe reaction and if not treated quickly, may lead to death. Betty, our foster pit bull, has had an allergic reaction numerous times, developing hives all over her body and a rash on her belly (above photos).

You may witness your dog being stung—for instance, your dog was chasing a bee or maybe he walked into a patch of clover where bees were hanging out. If he was stung on the nose or ears, those areas may swell even if your dog does not have an allergic reaction. Or he may simply yelp and hold up his paw if he stepped on the bee/wasp.

Or you may not witness the bee stinging your dog, but will instead see your dog's physical reaction, or symptoms, which indicate he is likely reacting to a bee sting.

Some dogs will have an allergic reaction that may include swelling of the face or breaking out in hives (large bumps) on the body—not necessarily isolated to the area that was stung.

In the most extreme cases, bee stings in dogs can be fatal. In this scenario, the dog will have a severe allergic reaction to the sting and go into anaphylactic shock. The first stage of symptoms may include sudden diarrhea or defecation, urination, severe itchiness and development of hives.

The symptoms rapidly progress to the second stage of symptoms, which include weakness, drooling, difficulty breathing, pale gums, cold limbs and mental confusion or depression.

Bee stings in dogs should not be ignored. **SEEK IMMEDIATE VETERINARY CARE IF YOUR DOG IS HAVING A SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTION.**

### **Summary of Symptoms**

- Mild to Moderate Symptoms: Redness and/or swelling at the site of the sting. The dog may scratch, bite, lick or rub his paw at the area where he was stung.
- Severe Symptoms: Swelling of the face or neck, hives (large bumps) on any part of the body, trouble breathing, diarrhea or sudden defecation, urination, weakness, drooling, pale gums, cold limbs, mental confusion or depression.

# Chapter 3

## *What to Do if Your Dog Gets Stung*

Complicating the issue is the fact that your dog **may not have an immediate reaction**. As my veterinarian pointed out, dogs are individuals and as such, can each react within a different timeframe—one dog may have an immediate reaction while another may begin showing signs many hours later. Because of this, if you suspect your dog has been stung, do **NOT** leave him/her alone. If they begin to show signs of an allergic reaction, you need to be there to take action.



If a dog is stung by a bee, it is often on the head or nose. That's because our furry friends delight in exploring the great outdoors with their nose to the ground. Some dogs will even try to bite or snap at a bee. **GET YOUR DOG TO THE VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY** if you suspect they swallowed a bee. A sting on the tongue or in the mouth or throat can cause swelling that can cut off the dog's air supply. The dog's level of distress can escalate very quickly. Do not wait for an allergic reaction. Get in your car **NOW**.

### **When Your Dog Has No Reaction, or a Mild Reaction**

Even if your dog does not have an allergic reaction, getting stung will hurt. The pain is caused by the venom released from the stinger. Examine the area where your dog is licking or itching or the paw he is favoring (if he stepped on a bee). If you can see the stinger (usually tiny, black and cone-shaped) try scraping it out with a credit card or fingernail. Only use tweezers as a last resort because squeezing the stinger may release more venom.

You can use a homeopathic poultice (see Chapter 3) to soothe the affected area and draw out the venom. You can also use an ice pack to reduce swelling and pain. If you don't have an ice pack, just place some ice cubes in a towel or wash cloth and hold it on your best friend's wound.

## When Your Dog Has a Severe Reaction

- **Call First:** Call your vet or emergency pet hospital and describe your dog's symptoms. Ask if you can give your dog Benadryl. It is important to talk to a vet before giving your dog Benadryl for the first time because the drug may be harmful to your dog if he/she suffers from specific health conditions. Benadryl may also have a negative effect if used in combination with another medication your dog may be on. Your vet will make a decision based on your dog's age, weight, health and medications.



- **Treatment:** Many vets use Benadryl, a human allergy medicine, at a dosage of 1 mg per 1 lb. of dog body weight. Tablets are 25 mg each, which would be the dosage for a 25 lb. dog. A 50 lb. dog would need two tablets, a 12 lb. dog would need half a tablet, etc. In severe cases of allergic reaction, your dog can go into anaphylactic shock. He/she will die without immediate medical attention. Small dogs should be given liquid

Children's Benadryl (rather than the adult tablets) and you should consult your veterinarian for dosage.

- If a dog is showing signs of a severe allergic reaction, an injectable form of Benadryl is often used by the vet because it will act faster than the oral form. The vet will often prescribe a follow-up dose or two of oral Benadryl once the dog is home.

Depending on the severity of a dog's allergic reaction, your vet may use additional supportive measures, such as an injection of Dexamethasone, a synthetic form of prednisone, a steroid. Dexamethasone provides a potent anti-inflammatory therapeutic action.

A dog in anaphylactic shock will receive respiratory and cardiovascular support. Fluids will be aggressively administered to counter low blood pressure. If the dog is having trouble breathing, a breathing tube will be placed in his throat or a surgical incision may be made directly into the dog's trachea. Oxygen will be administered if needed. An antibiotic may be administered to prevent the development of secondary bacterial infections.

A dog recovering from anaphylactic shock needs to have his condition monitored at a pet hospital for up to 48 hours prior to being released.

## Chapter 4

# *Homeopathic Treatment for Mild Allergic Reactions*

According to Dr. Roger De Haan, DVM, a holistic veterinarian in North Carolina, homeopathic medicine helps the body respond to a disease by stimulating the body's own healing substances. In homeopathy, a very small amount of the offending culprit—toxin, bee venom, etc.—is greatly diluted to form the treatment, known as a nosode (when made from pathogen, herbal or mineral sources) or iosode (made from organ, tissue or gland).

Dr. De Haan recommends having on hand a natural homeopathic “remedy” called *apis mel*, the homeopathic (non-toxic) venom from the honey bee. He sells this treatment in a 2-oz. bottle for \$16. More complex bee/wasp/hornet bite homeopathic remedies are also available. You can order these remedies by calling his office at 704-734-0061.

He offers the following directions for administering *apis mel*: Give your dog several of the homeopathic pellets by mouth immediately after seeing the dog stung or when symptoms appear and repeat every 5-15 minutes as needed. If your dog does not take pills easily, dissolve 6 pills in two tablespoons (1 oz.) of water and squirt 12-20 drops on the lips frequently or have him lap it from a saucer with a bit of broth for flavor.

If you choose, you can use both the Benadryl as well as a homeopathic remedy. If you decide to take this route, Dr. De Haan advises using a homeopathic remedy at least five minutes or more separated from a drug; meaning there is no

contraindication using both, but they *must* be given separately to be effective.

Most health food stores and some drug stores that sell homeopathics sometimes carry remedies for bee/wasp stings, either as apis mel or similar combination homeopathic products.

Another option is to use activated charcoal as a wet external poultice placed over any sting wound to draw out and help inactivate the poison.

### **Directions for making a poultice:**

- Mix 2 Tbls. charcoal with a small amount of water to form a wet paste. It should be moist but not runny.
- Spread the paste on half of a folded paper towel or cloth towel. The towel should be moist and covered with the paste.
- Cover the paste by folding over the other half of the paper towel.
- Place the charcoal poultice on the area that has been stung.
- Cover the poultice with plastic, such as Saran wrap, cut to overlap the poultice on each side so that it does not dry out.
- Bandage or tape the poultice securely in place and leave it on for several hours.

The poultice can be applied in conjunction with any of the above remedies as added protection. According to Dr. De Haan, activated charcoal is rated by the F.D.A. as effective in adsorbing (adsorbing rather than absorbing is the correct scientific/medical term in this case) many drugs, poisons and gases. It is one of the most powerful adsorbent materials known to medical science and it is 100% natural.

## Chapter 5

### *My Experience with Treating a Dog Having an Allergic Reaction*

On a warm June day, my husband Mike came back from checking on Betty Blue, a foster pit bull who stays in our office. He said I needed to come and look at Betty. I did, and saw that Betty had hives (large bumps) on her back legs and head. Her stomach was painfully red and I could even see her bright red skin underneath her gray fur, especially on the face. (See photo at left and photos on page 5.)



While Betty was not having trouble breathing, I was sure she was having an allergic reaction. Mike put Betty in the car and headed for the emergency vet clinic 50 miles away. Meantime, I called the clinic to let them know Mike and Betty were on the way and to describe Betty's symptoms.

Mike later told me the vet on duty said they were seeing a lot of dogs with similar reactions and guessed Betty had been stung by a bee or (less likely) bitten by a spider. She administered Benadryl and Dexamathasone and Betty's hives soon began subsiding. Mike was told to give Betty 75 mg (three tablets) of Benadryl the following morning. The vet recommended we keep Benadryl on hand and if Betty has a similar reaction in the future, give her 75 mg of Benadryl and wait 30-60 minutes. If we see no sign of improvement, Betty should be taken for immediate medical treatment.

# Chapter 6

## *Plan Ahead to Protect Your Dog from Bee Stings*

There are a number of precautions you can take to minimize the likelihood that your dog will be stung by a bee or wasp.

- Be aware that some odors will attract bees and wasps.
- Do not wear perfume or cologne or use scented soaps if you are going to be outside.
- Do not use shampoo or cologne with a strong fragrance on your dog.
- Keep your lawn cut short to discourage the growth of clover and flowering ground cover, which attract bees and wasps.
- Do not leave your dog outdoors unsupervised, even for a short period while you run to the store. If your dog has access to a doggie door, lock it or block it when you are not at home. If your dog is allowed to be outdoors when you are gone, he is at risk of being stung and having an allergic reaction.
- If you have fruit trees, pick up the fruit that has fallen on the ground. Overripe fruit is especially attractive to bees.

### Have the Sting Remedy Ready

- Talk to your vet today about using Benadryl if your dog is stung. While most dogs can tolerate the drug, a few will not. Purchase the Benadryl and have it with you when you take your dog camping, on a hike or to the dog park. If your vet feels your dog should not take

Benadryl due to age, health issues, etc., then ask him for an alternative.

- Purchase a homeopathic treatment (online or from your local health food store) specifically for bee and wasp stings. This can be used alone or in combination with Benadryl, but they need to be given at least five minutes apart in order to be effective.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Crist's writing career began in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade when she made greeting cards for relatives. Over the past three decades she has written for nonprofit organizations, magazines, newspapers and marketing agencies. She is also the author of five plays and the editor of Dog-Health-Today.com.

In this e-book she combines her passion for writing with her passion for dogs. Over the last 30 years, she and her husband Mike have been dog parents to over 40 dogs. Some dogs were their own fur kids, adopted from shelters and rescues. Others were foster dogs who found their way into the couple's hearts while they waited for the right family to come along.

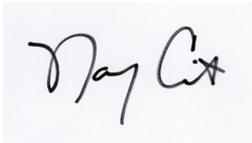
Caring for such a large number of dogs, including the 12 dogs currently in their home, has given Ms. Crist a great deal of firsthand experience with dog health problems. She is excited to share her knowledge of bee stings in dogs in this, her first e-book. Stay tuned! There are more dog health e-books on the horizon!

## Dear Dog Parent:

I hope you have found the information in this e-book to be helpful. My first experience dealing with Betty Blue's severe allergic reaction to a bee sting was a bit unnerving. The number and size of hives covering her body sent me straight to the phone to call our emergency veterinary hospital. That episode and Betty's subsequent allergic reactions, have taught me a great deal about the effect of bee stings on dogs. I share what I learn in the hopes that Dog Parents like you, armed with information, can be prepared in the event their dog has a severe reaction when stung by a bee.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact me at [DogHealthToday@gmail.com](mailto:DogHealthToday@gmail.com).

*Hoping your best friend has a long and healthy life,*

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Nancy Crist" in a cursive, flowing script.

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