

## **Pat Coleby on Vitamin C Treatment for SNAKE BITES**

Early in 1930, an American, Dr Klenner, (extensive article on Vitamin C by Dr. Klenner **here**) did much research on the use of Vitamin C on humans. In turn a Californian Vet, Dr Wendell Bellfield, carried on the good work with impressive results on all sorts of dog ailments that are generally considered incurable or fatal. Today, in USA, there are now a significant number of Vets practicing alternative Medicine such as this.

After studying the literature, I decided that I really had nothing to lose trying Vitamin C on my own farm animals. The first one was a pony, almost moribund, whose blood was later diagnosed as having the largest amount of Tiger Snake venom the Vet had ever seen in an animal. Within 24 hours of being unable to move, and also having considerable difficulty in breathing due to pneumonia, the pony was grazing happily in its owner's garden, apparently quite healthy. I only had one 30ml bottle of Vitamin C, half of what I would have liked, so I put half of the bottle into each side of the neck by intramuscular injection.

After that we treated sundry dogs, two cats and several goats including a stud buck. All recovered. A very valuable Alpaca which was being watched by its owner from her kitchen window went down to the dam to examine something. The owners, horrified, watched a large snake rise up and strike it on the nose - the worst place - and thanked her lucky stars the Vitamin C was in the fridge - not still on the shopping list. Rushing out with only 15 mls in the syringe - she injected the Alpaca before any symptoms arose. The snake had looked like a brown or a tiger, the result - happy ending.

The great advantage of Vitamin C is that anaphylaxis does not occur and the variety of snake does not matter. Vitamin C is cheap, easy to store and taking it on a hunting trip is no problem. All you need is a 20 ml syringe, some largish needles - say No 18 - and the bottle of Vitamin C. It can all be carried in a small wallet on ones belt. In between times it should be kept in the fridge. Although the stuff can be carried in summer without deteriorating, I suggest to hunters that they get a fresh supply each spring just to be on the safe side.

After much reading of printouts of Bellfield's and other literature, many supplied by Dr Glen Dettman, a retired pathologist who lives near Melbourne, I have tried Vitamin C in many situations - a dog in a tick coma, spider bites, dogs with Parvo, Tetanus following a terrible injury from a car, and in cases of shock - all with unfailing success.

Vitamin C can be used as crushed tablets or powder straight into the mouth in cases of sickness. From my own experience, rubbing the powder into a Redback spider bite took the pain (which is incredible) out within seconds. I followed it up with 10 grams by mouth. The spread of the poison in my arm stopped and I was able to resume work within a few minutes.

The first goat I treated with Vitamin C was given a teaspoon of ascorbic acid powder (about 5 grams) every half hour for two hours, like the Alpaca, he was bitten right on the nose as I later found out. He recovered perfectly well. That was in the days before the injectable supplies were available. 50 ml bottles of Vitamin C can be obtained from some Chemists, most fodder or pet stores. Make sure the brand is 2 mls per gram and not 4 otherwise you need twice as much at twice the cost. I mentioned the size of the needles as 18 or thereabouts because the stuff can be slightly glutinous and speed is generally all important on the occasions when it is needed.

Snake venom affects the nervous system, which slows down until natural functions cease and death occurs. A painful way to die. It can cause instant death but this is most unusual and I have never seen it. When a dog has been bitten, its eyes will soon appear to look all black. That is the pupils have relaxed and dilated. Since snake bite can - and usually does - occur unwitnessed, if your dog slows down and becomes lethargic or distressed, do look at the eyes at once and even if they do not show much sign get on with the injection. If by chance the fang marks are detected, (it is usually damp around the bite) rub in Vit C. Even a chewed up tablet will work. But do not waste time looking for the marks. They often only show up a few days later when the hair falls away around them.

Dogs of 30 to 50 kg will require about 10 - 15 mls by intramuscular injection in the side of the neck. I was taught by the teaching Vet at the Veterinary College to avoid doing injections in the back legs because it is too easy to damage vital nerves there. Three quarters to 1 cm penetration is needed, and, if in doubt, get it under the skin anyway. You can repeat the treatment without risk. Vitamin C overdose results in nothing worse than diarrhoea, and anaphylaxis cannot occur. However when the dog is really sick it will allow you to do the injecting (which can sting in small animals) without objecting. If it starts to make a fuss you know that it is feeling much better, and the subsequent doses should be given as powder in the mouth. It is a good idea to give two or three backups just to make sure all the venom has been detoxified.

**Pat Coleby**

(Pat is a farmer who writes books on animal care and lectures widely on the subject as well as being a consultant.) Originally published in the Australian Shooters Journal.