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Strychnine poisoning in dogs.

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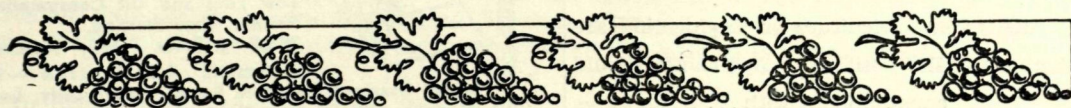
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STRYCHNINE POISONING IN DOGS

WHILE there is considerable variation in the reaction of different species of animals to strychnine, the dog is particularly susceptible. The early symptoms of strychnine poisoning are anxiety and restlessness, followed by twitching and violent muscular contractions. The dog remains fully conscious until death occurs from asphyxia.

The rapidity of the development of symptoms, and finally death, depends of course on the amount of strychnine consumed, but most cases are very rapid and immediate treatment is essential if the animal is to be saved.

Veterinary treatment is usually aimed at the expulsion of the stomach contents as quickly as possible, followed by an anaesthetic to control the convulsions. However strychnine is absorbed rapidly from the bowel and if convulsions are severe any attempt to cause the dog to vomit may be dangerous—the vomited material may enter the windpipe.

Apomorphine is usually injected by veterinarians in the early stages—this drug causes rapid vomiting, following which Nembutal is given by intravenous injection to cause immediate anaesthetisation. The animal is kept anaesthetised until the convulsions have ceased.

Where veterinary attention is not readily obtainable treatment is difficult.

Provided the animal is induced to vomit very soon after the swallowing of a bait and before sufficient strychnine has been absorbed into the blood stream its chance of recovery would be quite good. For this purpose reliance must be placed on drugs which are readily obtainable and easily given. Sulphate of zinc, common salt, and mustard are often used for this purpose but perhaps the most reliable emetic of this type is ordinary washing soda. One medium-sized crystal swallowed by the dog will generally induce vomiting quite rapidly.

An "outback" method of inducing vomiting, when no other emetics are available, is to push a wad of tobacco down the dog's throat as soon as it is known that he has taken a bait.

As convulsions can be brought on by any noise or movement every effort should be made to see that the dog is placed somewhere where noise will be reduced to a minimum.—J.S.

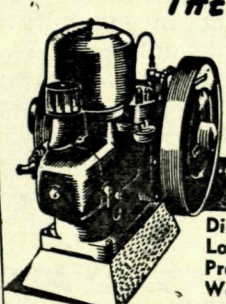
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