



VETERINARY REPORT

To whom it may concern

On Tuesday the 18th of March, I was presented with three dogs that were confiscated from 20 Emily Hob House Street, Townsend Estate by Inspector Lindo. The dogs were confiscated on the basis of tail docking. On arrival at the SPCA, the dogs were tested for Parvovirus and Canine Distemper Virus due to them having no vaccination history. One of the dogs tested positive for Parvovirus displayed typical clinical signs of the disease, due to this, the sick animal was humanely euthanised to prevent further suffering and was not evaluated in this report.

ANIMAL DETAILS AND EXAMINATION FINDINGS

Patient number: A29524

Case number: 198437

Species: Canine

Breed: Pitbull cross

Sex: Male intact

Age: +/- 4 months

Tattoo/Microchip/Other: Nil

Description: Tan/black and white

Vaccination status: None

Weight: 7.3kg

- **Description of condition:** The dog presented with its tail docked between the joint space between Caudal Vertebra 10 and 11 (see Figure 1, Figure 2 below). Upon evaluation, the tail stump was still soft and was not completely healed, this may indicate that the procedure was done recently and not when the puppy was a few days old.
- **Cause:** Tail docking
- **Prognosis:** fair



Figure 1a: Lateral radiograph



Figure 1b: Ventrodorsal radiograph



Figure 2a: Photograph of dog



Figure 2b: Photograph of tail stump

Patient number: A29522
Case number: 198457
Species: Dog
Breed: Pitbull cross
Sex: Male intact
Age: +/- 4 months
Tattoo/Microchip/Other: Nil
Description: Black and white
Vaccination status: None
Weight: 13kg

- **Description:** The dog presented with its tail cut through Caudal Vertebra 9 and not through the joint (see Figure 3, Figure 4 below). The wound is still open and there is a degree of granulation seen. It is not a completely healed wound and indicates the tail docking was done more recently and not when the dog was a few days old.
- **Cause:** tail docking
- **Prognosis:** fair



Figure 3a: Lateral radiograph



Figure 3b: Ventrodorsal radiograph



Figure 4a: Photograph of tail

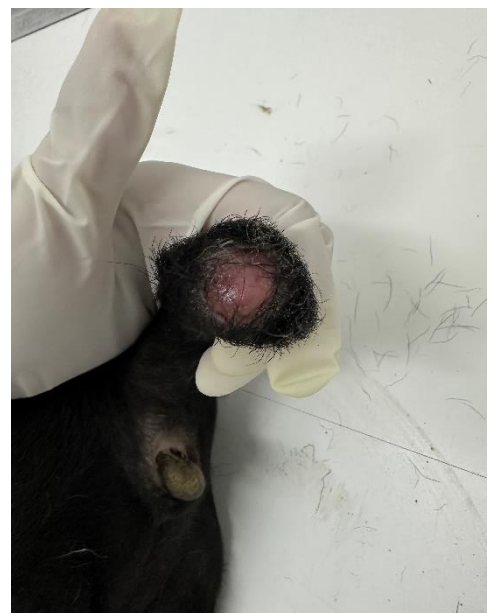


Figure 4b: Photograph of tail stump

Recommendation: After clinical examination, we provided supportive treatment and care for the animals. Treatments included a vitamin injection, antibiotics, anti-nausea and anti-emetic medications. After an internal ethical review, the decision was made to humanely euthanise the animals, on the 20th of March 2024, due to their exposure to the parvovirus positive dog that was confiscated along with them. The dogs were then radiographed.

Parvovirus, specifically Canine Parvovirus (CPV), is a highly contagious disease that affects dogs. It primarily attacks the gastrointestinal tract and can lead to severe and often fatal symptoms, including vomiting, diarrhoea (often bloody), dehydration, lethargy, and loss of appetite. Puppies and unvaccinated dogs are especially vulnerable to Parvovirus. It is transmitted through close contact and can survive in the environment for long periods of time, making it highly resilient and easily spread between dogs. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent Parvovirus infection.

Given our environment at the SPCA, where the welfare of all animals is paramount, we cannot risk the potential transmission of the virus to other dogs. Additionally, the critical care required for such cases couldn't be adequately provided. The decision to humanely euthanise the three dogs was made in their best interest as well as the welfare of the broader dog population in our care.

Tail docking

Tail docking is the act of amputating the distal part of the tail, whether it is by severing with a knife, scissor or scalpel blade, or constricting the tail with a rubber band, resulting in consequent necrosis of the tail and its falling off. The cut goes through the joint passing through extremely sensitive nerves, cartilage and bone. As of June 1st, 2008, the South African Veterinary council (SAVC) does not condone routine docking of tails by a Veterinarian. (SAVC, 2009). Veterinarians are only allowed to amputate tails for medical reasons such as trauma or cancer.

Amputation of the tail results in acute pain to the animal, even when it is done under anaesthesia. There is a risk of necrosis of the tail, infection, bleeding, and can also result in death of the animal. Tail docking can cause chronic pain and neuromas. There are also chronic health problems associated, such as atrophy and degeneration of the pelvic muscles, which increases the risk of urinary incontinence and perineal hernias. (PC Bennet, 2003).

Dogs use their tails as a form of communication, tail behaviour is an integral part in canine communication. Tail activity and position are used as a signal to display positive and negative emotions, moods and intentions. (Mellor, 2018) They are able to express when they are happy, scared or anxious. Tails are also used as a warning sign and indicator before a dog bites or attacks.

When the tail is docked, it makes it more difficult for a people and other dogs to assess how a dog is likely to react in a certain situation and can lead to an increase in dogs' fights or dog bites to people.

Routine tail docking is an unnecessary procedure (Mills, 2016), often resulting in the loss of a healthy tail, by definition this is considered maiming of the animal. Maiming an animal is a violation of Section 2(1)(a) of the Animal Protections Act number 71 of 1962 which states . "Any person who:- overloads, overdrives, overrides, ill-treats, neglects, infuriates, tortures or maims or cruelly beats, kicks, goads or terrifies any animal."

Routine tail docking does not provide any benefit to puppies, it is primarily a cosmetic procedure and should not be performed. (Association, 2013)

COMMENTS

The animals have endured considerable suffering and pain, as evidenced by the veterinary report above. It is apparent that their owners, who are entrusted with their care, failed to provide them with the essential veterinary attention they required. I believe this case should be taken further to prevent the suffering to any additional animals they may have in their care in the future and to get justice for the ones that were.

In my professional opinion, these dogs have suffered unnecessarily.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Deepali Narotam (BVSc)
Veterinarian

Date compiled: 21/03/24

References

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