



VETERINARY REPORT

On the 24/02/25, a dog named Max was brought through the SPCA clinic for consultation where I was the attending Veterinarian. The dog was brought in by a young woman however paperwork says Owner is Mark George of 27 Hornbill Crescent Sea Winds.

ANIMAL DETAILS

Name: MAX
Sex: Male Intact
Age: 5 months
Species: Canine
Breed: Boerboel
Description: Tan
Weight: 17.6Kg
Case number: H101666

History

24/02/25:

On presentation at SPCA:

BAR, Depressed habitus
Temperature: 38.7C, mucous membranes pink and moist, heart and chest auscultation: NAD
Coat: Mild flea burden, no hairloss or skin irritation
Lymph nodes: NAD. Good Body Condition Score, ideal weight for age.
Abdominal palpation: No discomfort, no abnormalities

Tail:

80% of the dog's tail was necrotic and black, there was severe muscle atrophy of tail. Proximal tail had a deep laceration half way through the tail. Upon entering consult room, I was met with a very foul odour emanating from the tail wound. Tail was infected and the animal no longer had sensation in the distal part of the tail. Radiographs reveal distortion of Tail caudal vertebra, laceration visible on radiographs.

Duration: Owner claimed lesion happened 2 days ago, evaluation reveals that is not an acute wound and has been left for prolonged period. Possible more than a week due to muscle atrophy and necrosis seen.

Cause: It is highly likely that this is a failed tail docking incident, there is a point where there is a deep transverse laceration half way through the proximal tail, it is also likely that the tail was constricted or tied off proximally causing death to any tail tissue distal to the constriction, this is evident in the lesions seen. In my experience, lesions seen are not consistent with an animal biting his tail.



Photos from day of presentation

Radiographs



Post-surgery photos (Recovery)



Treatment given:

- Due to the severe necrosis and infected tail, I decided the animal needed **urgent** amputation of the tail to prevent sepsis and to improve welfare of the animal.
- Animal was placed on a drip and given intravenous antibiotic and pain therapy.
- Post-tail amputation the habitus of the animal increased drastically and the puppy is now very playful

Comments:

- The laceration was very proximal on the tail, in order to perform successful surgery, Max needed a very high tail amputation
- Post-surgery, he could pass urine and faeces successfully.
- He has to be monitored closely for dehiscence of surgical site as there was not a lot of healthy tissue left to work with due to necrosis of the tail.
- This animal has suffered immensely and unnecessarily. It is clearly that the wellbeing of the animal was negatively affected by the tail lesions. I do not advise that this animal is returned to the owner.

Note on Tail docking in dogs:

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. 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 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.

Yours sincerely

Dr D Narotam (BVSc)
Veterinarian

Date compiled: 04 March 2025