

## **ABSCESS**

An abscess is the formation of an accumulation of infectious material containing a thick, yellow fluid. The surrounding area is often very swollen and painful. An abscess that has fully formed feels like a “water-filled balloon” when touched. It may feel hot, swollen, and is usually very painful when touched. It is very similar to a pimple on a person’s skin before it “pops.”

**Abscesses are caused by bacterial contamination of a puncture wound, such as a scratch or bite wound. The skin over this type wound heals quickly on the outside which encloses the bacteria pushed in by the puncture. Since the bacteria can’t get out, an infection begins to form.**

If an abscess is not surgically drained, the bacterial infection can spread in the surrounding tissues and eventually all over the body through the blood stream. Blood poisoning may occur which may threaten the life of the animal.

**Signs of blood poisoning from an abscess include depression, dehydration, fever, lack of appetite, and vomiting.**

Treatment involves drainage of the infection. Sedation may be required. The wound must then be kept open, so that it will heal from the **inside** out. Scabs must be removed daily to insure that proper drainage continues to occur. Systemic antibiotics are needed to kill the source of infection.

Prevention of abscess formation includes prompt examination of possible puncture wounds and use of appropriate antibiotic therapy. Male dogs and cats should be neutered to help prevent fighting.