

CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURY

Injury to the head (head trauma) can be very dangerous--even result in death of your pet. A blow to the head can cause swelling of the brain tissues, and also internal bleeding from ruptured blood vessels as a result of the injury.

Since the brain lies inside the bony skull, any bleeding or swelling that occurs will put downward pressure on the brain. This downward pressure from the bleeding or swelling on the brain squeezes or compresses the brain impairing its normal functioning ability. Severe bleeding or swelling can result in damage that is either temporary or permanent. In the early stages, it is impossible to tell how much permanent damage will result.

Signs of a concussion may include erratic eye movements, weakness, incoordination, dilated or constricted pupils, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, disorientation, seizures, or coma.

Treatment of head injuries is aimed at reducing pressure on the brain by decreasing swelling of the brain tissue caused by the injury. In severe cases, surgery may be required to relieve the pressure.

Pets with head trauma are usually hospitalized until they are stabilized and the continuing swelling of the brain tissue stops. Complete rest, along with medication is required to insure recovery from a concussion. Injuries that result in minimal clinical signs can become much more severe if the pet is allowed to become excited because of an increase in blood pressure that increases brain swelling.

The final outcome of a head injury that results in a concussion depends on the severity of the injury and the duration of clinical signs. Generally speaking, the longer clinical signs remain apparent, the less the chance of full recovery. Recovery from concussions can occur very rapidly (a few hours) or take extremely long periods of time (months). It is impossible to say for sure if complete recovery will occur and if it does, how long it will take.