

CLAIM OF THE MONTH

GASTROINTESTINAL FOREIGN BODY

Pet: Tucker* a 4-month-old male goldendoodle



TUCKER'S STORY:

Tucker is a bouncy, mischievous and adorable four-month-old goldendoodle puppy. Like many goldendoodles, he explores his world with his mouth and often eats things he shouldn't.

One morning, Tucker started the day by vomiting yellow fluid, paper towels and some other unidentified materials. His appetite was good, but soon after he ate his breakfast, he vomited all of the food back up again. Over the next 24 hours, his energy level dipped and he continued to vomit, especially whenever he ate or drank water.

Tucker's family brought him to their family veterinarian. They told the health team about his naughty eating habits and mentioned he had been playing with a sock, which was now missing.

On physical examination, the veterinarian could feel a suspicious lump within the abdomen. A radiograph confirmed a complete obstruction of Tucker's small intestine. Some bloodwork was completed, showing he had some minor dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities. IV fluids and pain control started and surgery was planned to explore his abdomen.

ABOUT THE CONDITION: GASTROINTESTINAL FOREIGN BODIES

Both dogs and cats occasionally ingest materials that are not digestible and can lead to obstructions or trauma to the gastrointestinal tract. Young, curious puppies and kittens and certain food-motivated breeds are notorious for inappropriate ingestions.

Common foreign bodies include things like toys, hair ties, corn cobs, socks and underwear, rocks and plastic. Linear foreign bodies like thread, yarn and ribbon can be particularly dangerous because they can lacerate the inside of the gastrointestinal tract.

Undigestible materials can become lodged anywhere in the digestive system, including the esophagus, stomach and small and large intestines. They may cause pain and partial or complete obstructions, interfering with food digestion and water intake. This results in appetite loss, vomiting and diarrhea. The resulting dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities can make patients extremely sick in a short period of time. Trauma to the stomach or intestines can even allow bacteria to enter the abdominal cavity, causing peritonitis, sepsis and in some cases, even death. For this reason, foreign body ingestion is a medical and surgical emergency.



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TREATMENT

Treatment for gastrointestinal foreign bodies involves stabilizing the patient first. That means correcting dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities, treating pain and nausea and instituting antibiotic therapy as necessary.

When the patient is stable, either endoscopy ("scope") or surgery is performed to locate and remove the foreign body. The affected parts of the gastrointestinal tract must be examined closely for trauma, and sometimes damaged sections need to be removed and healthy portions sutured together.

After surgery, most pets experience a great deal of relief. Ongoing pain and nausea management and antibiotic therapy is required for a week. Some pets need additional nutritional support, appetite stimulation and assistance with gastrointestinal motility. Potential complications include poor healing, infection and strictures.

Tucker was taken to surgery where a sock was removed from his small intestine without complications. He recovered very well and was eating the following day.

CLAIM OUTCOME

Tucker required \$3,931.55** in veterinary care for the initial treatment of his intestinal foreign body. For their first claim on the policy, Luke's relieved family was reimbursed \$2,945.24 of those fees by their Pets Plus Us Accident and Illness More plan.

Now that's one way to demonstrate the value of pet insurance! We hope you stick to the kibble from now on, Tucker!

*Name changed for privacy

**Source: 2022 PTZ Insurance claims data. Value of claims in \$ CAD.

