

Date: Tue, 06 Dec 2005 15:40:20 -0000

From: "wdlarson" <wendy.larson@comcast.net>

Subject: Symmetrical Black Patches on Ears = Rabies Vaccine-Induced Ischemic Dermatopathy

Symmetrical dark spots on the ears are probably Rabies Vaccine Induced Ischemic Dermatopathy, or RVI-ID for short. About 1 in 10, maybe more, Norwich Terriers appear to have this autoimmune reaction to the adjuvants in rabies vaccines. I have posted frequently on this topic in the past, and more and more dogs keep being identified with RVI-ID. I have a longer article I wrote, photos, and a shorter article Kathleen Wherly wrote (based on my longer piece) for publication in the AKC Gazette; I am happy to email these off-list to anyone who is interested.

Here is one of my past posts on this subject, for those of you who are new to the topic:

We must have our dogs vaccinated for rabies.

At the same time, it appears about 1 in 10 Norwich Terriers will have an autoimmune reaction to the vaccine ingredients (not the killed virus in the vaccine, but the adjuvants intended to stimulate the immune system to create more antibodies). This sensitivity is hereditary, and probably one of our dogs several generations back had it, and it has been passed along ever since. It was probably not noticeable when different vaccination protocols were followed, but recently vets have been seeing it more and more, among all breeds. (I personally feel this is less a problem not with the dog's genetics, and more a problem with how we vaccinate them.)

The autoimmune reaction is called "Rabies Vaccine Induced Ischemic Dermatopathy," or RVI-ID. What happens is that the dog's immune system starts attacking its own vascular system -- mistaking blood vessels for a foreign substance/antigen, and attacking and destroying them. It is not fatal, but can disfigure your dog and is of course not at all healthy.

Dogs with the autoimmune response to the vaccine adjuvants may not have noticeable symptoms (or they may be overlooked) at the first, second, or even third vaccinations, so you may not know your dog is sensitive to this until after you have 'successfully' given prior rabies vaccinations.

Those of us with Norwich Terriers who have had this reaction will urge ALL other Norwich Terrier guardians to take the following steps with your veterinarian:

- Administer the first shot at the OLDEST AGE allowed - let the puppy have as much age, size, and strength as possible.
- Do not use vaccine from FORT DODGE (it may be a great vaccine, but has been a common factor in several Norwich Terriers that developed RVI-ID) -- have your vet order vaccine from another manufacturer
- Administer the vaccine INTRAMUSCULARLY (the vets at UC Davis say RVI-ID has become more common since shots started commonly being administered subcutaneously -- shooting the vaccine into the muscle may help the dog localize its reaction, and have a smaller reaction)
- Administer the rabies vaccine ALONE - no other vaccines at the same time - and wait 6 to 8 weeks before giving another vaccine
- WATCH your vet administer the shot so you know exactly where the vaccine was given: you need to watch that spot closely over the coming weeks and look for any swelling, dark pigmentation, flaking of the skin, sores or bleeding, or any other unusual symptoms. In the weeks and months after the vaccination, if you see sores or bleeding at the dog's extremities (e.g. tips of ears), or hard and/or dark lumps near the injection site, this is classic symptom of RVI-ID. Unless you watch the injection you will not know where to look for symptoms later, so watch!
- If you see any unusual symptoms contact this list or a Veterinary Dermatologist familiar with RVI-ID for more information.

Note that RVI-ID can be treated -- my black and tan Zachary takes Pentoxifylline daily to make his red blood cells "flexible" so they can travel through damaged capillaries and deliver oxygen throughout his vascular system. Treatment is much more expensive and bothersome than following the recommended steps above!

Also note that most general-practitioner vets will misdiagnose RVI-ID because it is still fairly uncommon (unfortunately not in our breed). If you see any unusual symptoms, take your dog to a veterinary dermatologist.

Everyone, please take this seriously and be good to your dog.

Sincerely,
Wendy and Zachary (with RVI-ID) and Cameron

for more info:

http://www.norwichtales.com/v2/rvi_id.htm?v=glance&s=books