

AN ON TRACK VETERINARIAN'S VIEWPOINT RE POST RACE DIAPHRAGMATIC SPASM (THUMPS), POST RACE COLLAPSE AND RADIOCARPAL FRACTURE.

Dr C L Doyle
Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club
PO Box 22
Glenside SA 5065

Outline of Presentation:

- An outline of both conditions.
- An OTV'S impression of both these conditions as they occur at the track.
- Discussion of the clinical signs, conditions under which they occur, and related racing performance.
- Possible welfare considerations and further research.
- Radiocarpal Fracture **.Is this Injury career ending?**

Diaphragmatic Flutter/Cramp

This condition presents itself as a flutter or cramp of the diaphragm which seems to occur from 30sec to 1 min post race. Dogs may be observed with the condition walking back to the kennel house post race or certainly in the wash area. The condition appears in varying severity from being visible between the last two ribs to tremor over the last 4-5 ribs and the abdominal musculature .It is thought now that an over-riding of impulses down the phrenic nerve causes an irregular contraction of the diaphragm.

Signs Include

- Irregular rapid breathing
- Staggering
- Varying degrees of distress evidenced by excessive panting
- Collapse
- Collapse and death in some cases.

Further Observations

- Occurs 30 secs to 2 mins post racing
- Flutter mild to severe over LHS rib cage
- Not associated with general cramp to date
- Obvious physical distress in some cases viz
 - excessive panting
 - instability/staggering
 - occasional vomiting
- Total duration of condition is from 15 mins to 1 hr. This is hard to ascertain accurately in the Race nights.

Possible Causes

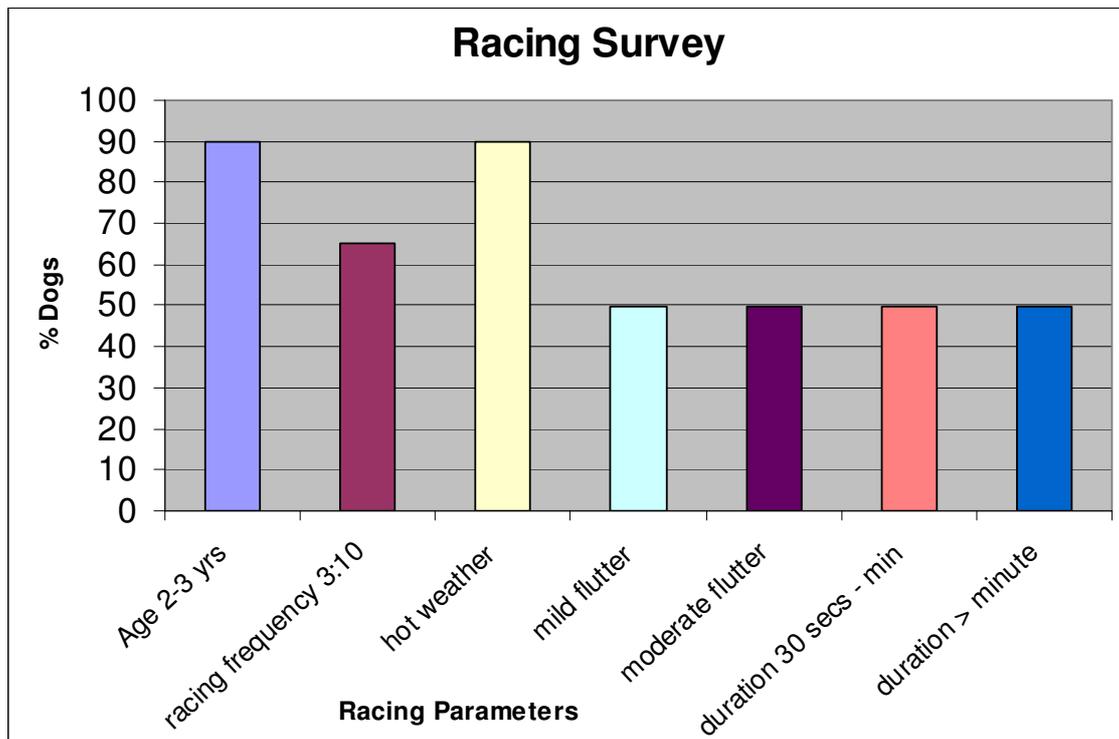
- Hot Weather conditions including:
 - Travel to and from the track
 - Kennel house cooling
 - Hydration status of the dogs
 - Attention to Fluid and Electrolytes days before runs in hot weather.
- Stepping up in distances during hot spells
- Repetitive racing
- Care when dogs are down in wt

Dog Survey Racenight

This survey was made possible with the washing bays now situated inside the kennel house and in full view of the staff.

Several simple parameters were observed with 100 dogs showing signs of the condition at the track post race. These included dogs' condition/ repetition of racing/ raceday conditions/ weight variation/ age/ post race stress/ race result / intensity of flutter.

A table is included with the results of the track observations.



Discussion and Summary

- Race day hot weather, common cause.
- Condition of dog - poor condition aggravates situation.
- Repetition of racing plus hot weather emerged as a scenario that trainers, OTVs and Stewards should perhaps think about.
- Weight variation. Negative variations particularly 0.4kg and beyond greatly increase the likelihood of the condition occurring. Have a look at the weight sheets prior to Race 1, Dogs that are 0.6.-1.0Kg down on a hot day rarely perform and, in most instances, are severely compromised. This situation should be avoided at all costs.
- Age - generally a condition of young dogs
- Post race distress, related to intensity of flutter. In severely distressed dogs the magnitude of the flutter is increased.
- Race results. Rarely win in the moderate to severe cases.

Treatment at the track

- Attention to cooling the dog /adequate time in washing bay
- Cooling vests if available
- Ice if available
- i/v fluids if needed
- O2 in some cases

OTVs Overall Position

- Welfare of dog is paramount.
- Pressure to race dogs consistently
- Enforce the hot weather policy at the individual tracks. This requires consistent and firm dialogue with the stewards and continual contact with the meteorological bodies.
- Situation with clubs and Sky Channel must not interfere with the dogs' welfare.
- RSPCA and AWL involvement is good PR, especially if a well meaning, unidentified complaint from the public is received!

Post Race Staggering Collapse

This condition has been considered separately because I feel that it is a different post race entity. The post race signs are evidenced on the video footage shown. Once a particular dog showed the initial signs we were able to film them post race with the help of the Sky cameras after their commitments.

Signs at the track

- Dogs are fine immediately post race.
- 1-2 mins post race the staggering commences generally on the way back from the catching pen. This presents as a high stepping gait, wobbling, sometimes resulting in collapse.
- No evidence of diaphragmatic flutter seen to date.
- No general cramp seen to date either dorsally or in gracilis etc.
- If they don't proceed to collapse, condition resolves in 2-3 mins.
- Dog followed through several starts over 400, 500, 600 and over 300 metres at the straight track.
- No evidence of airway obstruction from the tongue, tonsillitis etc.

Treatment at the Track

- The dog must be supported in a standing position.
- Small amounts of water given if available on track proper.
- O2 has been required in 2 cases with dramatic improvement.

OTV's Position

This presents a dilemma for me at the track and I feel the following points should be considered and discussed at some stage.

- A definitive cause of the condition.
- An interpretation as to whether the dog should be racing.
- Requirement for further Veterinary involvement before further noms will be accepted.
- Welfare considerations.
- Media involvement
- Issuing of certificates for racing in another State. The status of these dogs is conveniently not passed on to the next trainer.
- Steward involvement.
- Further research
- Discussion with trainers on race night as the conditions present themselves.

Tests and Further Research

- Routine Bloods ECG on 2 Dogs revealed nothing.

- Dr David Davies at the Specialist Centre in Adelaide feels that blood gases would be beneficial, but the logistics of collecting them in the catching pen immediately post race poses a problem, as do the cost considerations.

Radial Carpal Fracture Is this Injury salvageable for racing?