

Are grass seeds dangerous for dogs?

The short answer is “yes, they can be”, but we’ve pulled together the information you need to know. Then you can run out into the sun on the Common with your pups knowing exactly what to look out for if there’s a grass seed trying to ruin your day.



What are grass seeds and why are they a risk to dogs?

Grass seeds are green, about 1-2 cm, and are usually shaped like a dart with one end that's able to penetrate your dog's outer skin. The other end of the seed looks similar to normal grass and increases the seed's surface area for travel via wind or animal.

The reason that grass seeds can be dangerous for dogs, is that they can easily penetrate their outer skin in multiple areas. If left untreated this can be incredibly painful – in worst case scenarios the internal damage it may cause can even be fatal.

Certain breeds – often long-eared, such as Cockapoos, Cocker Spaniels, and Springer Spaniels – are the most commonly affected by grass seeds.

What are the symptoms and consequences of grass seed penetration?

There are a few ways that a grass seed can impact your furry best friend. Depending on which area the grass seed penetrates, it can have different symptoms, but one symptom that is common across all areas of the body is redness and swelling; this can be a sign that a grass seed has broken the skin.

Grass seeds commonly get in between the toes of the dog's foot, referred to as the interdigital space. Once attached to the surrounding soft feathery fur, the grass seed then makes its way towards the foot itself, easily penetrating the thin skin before starting to burrow deep into - and through - highly sensitive tissues of the foot resulting in extreme pain, discomfort, infection and sudden onset (acute) lameness.

The second most common place for these seeds to cause problems is down the ear canal. Their uni-directional nature and shape allows the grass seed to work its way from the fur around the ears down along the ear canal, and come to rest right up against the delicate ear drum.

What are the treatments for a grass seed infection?

If caught early, many grass seeds can be pulled from the skin by the seed's tail, or with a long pair of tweezers called crocodile forceps. However, this is always best left to the experts. Then, in more serious cases, surgery may be needed.

In the case of surgery, anaesthesia or sedatives may be used so that your vet can search for the root of the problem without further discomfort to your dog. Depending on the location and seriousness of the damage, further treatment may be necessary, such as antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medicine.

How can I prevent my dog from the dangers of grass seeds?

Naturally, prevention is preferable to treatment, and there are a few different ways you can reduce the risk of grass seeds in summer:

-) **Avoid areas with long grass** – Walking in areas where the grass has been cut short reduces the risk of grass seeds – this includes your own garden.
-) **Regular grooming and excessive hair trimming** – Grooming your dog may catch any seeds before they can do harm, and occasionally trimming excessive hair around the paws, ears, and arm pits can prevent the seed from latching on in the first place.
-) **Post-walk checks** – Give their fur and body a thorough check after a walk to make sure there are no grass seeds present, and keep the symptoms mentioned above in mind – especially any areas of redness or swelling.