

**Mancelona Veterinary Hospital
10338 South U.S. Highway 131
Mancelona, MI
231-587-0520**

PORCUPINE QUILLS

Porcupines are normally very docile animals. Usually the pets that we see that have been quilled have bitten at, lunged at, or simply sniffed too closely to a porcupine. Quite often they will strike with their tail and this is sufficient to imbed several quills.

- Cutting them in half does not make it easier to pull them out. The end of the quill that is imbedded in the animal has microscopic barbs. These barbs help the quills migrate throughout the muscle layers of the animal. If the impact is hard enough between the pet and the quill, it will sometimes go deep in the muscle and in a matter of minutes, may migrate beneath the skin surface. Most dogs will rub, paw, and dig at the quills and this will break the quills off, leaving them submerged under the skin.

Aftercare Instructions:

- Watch them closely.
- Prevent them from going on stairs or other dangerous areas until they are fully awake from the anesthesia. This may take 6 to 8 hours.
- Offer your pet a small amount of water 6-8 hours after their procedure. After an hour you may offer them a small amount of food. If your pet experiences vomiting, pick up their food and water and try again in the morning.

One word of caution:

Not all of the submerged or broken quills can be found. Even when your pet is anesthetized, there may be quills that are laying between muscle planes in a way that we are not able to feel them. With time, they will continue to migrate and will usually come out at another area. Pet your dog carefully for a few weeks after quill removal to ensure that you do not poke yourself. If you do feel a quill, some dogs will permit you to remove them with tweezers or needle nose pliers. In some cases, general anesthesia may be required again to remove them. The number of these migrating quills depends on how many quills your pet had to begin with, the time between them being "quilled" and having the quills removed, where they were quilled at, as well as how badly they were rubbing or digging at the quills.

Hopefully your pet will learn from this one experience that porcupines should be avoided, but unfortunately our experience has been that most dogs will go after porcupines time after time. Because of this you may need to prevent your dog from running in the woods or keep them under direct supervision when they are there.