

Vitamin K for Dog's Bleeding Not Needed

After neutering surgery, dogs and puppies commonly bleed slightly.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I recently had my 3-year-old Labrador Retriever mix neutered at the SPCA. He was bleeding, so I took him to our local emergency vet clinic. They gave him a vitamin K injection to try to clot and stop the bleeding. He was still bleeding the next morning, so I took him back to the SPCA. They said the stitches had come out, but some bleeding is common. Did the emergency clinic give my dog vitamin K for no reason? Should I try to get my money back?

A. The emergency clinic probably did not rip you off, but they did not practice the best medicine, either.

It is not unheard of for there to be some bleeding following a surgical procedure. Usually this is the result of loose sutures (stitches) or oozing from multiple small blood vessels that got cut. However, it could be due to a clotting problem if a dog happened to have ingested rat poison in the previous three to five days. This is the equivalent of a person having surgery who has been on blood thinners.

However, most emergency clinics have a simple blood test for clotting function. In the unlikely event that your dog did get into rat poison, the test would be abnormal and vitamin K would be part of the treatment plan.

To give a vitamin K injection without testing for a clotting problem first is considered sloppy medicine. Most likely the injection did not hurt anything, and it would not be considered malpractice or unethical. Sometimes the cost of the test can be as much as the injection, so either way you would have incurred some expense.

Fortunately, it sounds like your dog is doing OK, so I would not recommend fretting any further. If they have any kind of feedback form, you could let them know that they should have run a blood test to determine if vitamin K was needed before giving it.