Hedgehog - bitewounds

On January 23 (2012) a hedgehog was presented at the clinic with a large contaminated wound in the right abdominal wall. The animal was probably tracked down and nibbled by rats while in hibernation. Hedgehogs are usually deep asleep and hide in safe places at this time of the year. The animal only weighed 390 grams and was moderately dehydrated. The massive skin defect did not seem to limit its mobility or cause any pain.

Product: L-Mesitran Soft and L-Mesitran Tulle

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Method

After stabilisation with heated Ringer’s solution 5% glucose - and a mix of Vitason AD, EC, Vanavit™ B complex and Catosal™. The wound was covered with meloxicam (Metacam™) and an antibiotic layer with enroflaxine (Baytril™) 2.5%.

After 20 minutes in a quiet protected place, the wound was treated under isoflurane inhalational anesthesia. After thorough surgical debridement and intensive irrigation with a mixture of Calendula tincture and NaCl, the wound was covered with honey gel (L-Mesitran Soft). Thereafter the Tulle (cut to the appropriate size) was placed on top of the wound bed. The dressing was covered with a compress and fixated with self adhering bandages.

When applying protective bandages, it is important to make sure that is not as tight as a pressure bandage, as this could lead to breathing problems. A fixation on the shoulders and across between the forelimbs ensures that the bandage remains in place.

Until 05/02/2012 (two weeks) the wound was treated daily alternating between 1)bathing the wound with malvaceae (mallow) tea and anaerobic organisms microorganisms (EM), and 2) application of the honey gel and honey tulle covered with a protective bandage.

The antibiotic treatment was maintained for five days. Meloxicam reduced pain and inflammation during one week. In addition, the patient received up to 31/01/2012 daily infusion to support detoxification and immune system. In addition the wound healing was promoted from 01/02 until 06/02 with a wound laser. The wound was cleaned on a daily basis with effective microorganisms and the honey gel. From 17/02 until 21/02 the wound was only treated with L-Mesitran wound gel, since a dry crust remained, under which the scar tissue was formed. The final inspection took place on 21/02, again under isoflurane anesthesia. At this time, the entire skin defect was completely closed with little scar tissue (fig. 4).

Discussion

The western European hedgehog is a common pan-European free-ranging animal protected by wildlife conservation laws, which is generally not kept as a pet (Ulrich, 2010). The major causes of mortality are probably road casualties and hypothermia during the winter months. In this case the hedgehog was woken up during hibernation because other animals were eating it alive. Practicing wound management on exotic patients can be challenging due to their small size, unusual anatomy, difficult behaviors, and tendency for developing secondary stress-related health problems (hernandez, 2004).

The osmotic action of the honey gel caused an effective cleaning of the wound area, the necrotic tissue was autolytical debrided. The Tulle product prevented the new granulation tissue of adhering to the dressing, which resulted in a fast uncomplicated wound closure, indicating that no secondary stress-related health problems manifested. The animal was therefore released into the wild again.

References