

## Foxtails Are Dangerous for Dogs and Cats

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Foxtails are not bad looking for a grass-like weed. They bring to mind prairie landscape images by Grant Wood or Thomas Hart Benton. You might be reluctant to pull them because you don't know if an ugly weed might replace them. But, they are dangerous and can be deadly for dogs and cats, and on occasion even injure infants and children.

Primarily located west of the Mississippi River, foxtails appear deceptively soft, but the tips are actually comprised of several very fine bristles. These bristles become even more dangerous once they die and dry up. Remember also that grass awns can cause similar issues if they imbed in or on the body.

Foxtail bristles can find their way into a companion pet's body through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, paw, and skin. They can even be eaten or inhaled. Foxtail bristles do not break down and so relentlessly work their way upwards to involve other parts of the body causing abscesses and internal puncture wounds. In fact, foxtails have been found in dogs' glands, hearts, brains, lungs, livers, and other organs upon necropsy.

If you and your companion dog go for a walk or hike in an area laden with foxtails, check your dog immediately for any imbedded plant awn or bristle as you would for fleas and ticks when you get home. Check the eyes, ears, nose, inside the mouth, paws, tail and body. The same applies to outdoor and indoor/outdoor cats.

Carefully remove the entire bristle or grass awn with tweezers. You can also try to comb or brush the body gently. If the bristle broke off when you were trying to extract it, is deeply embedded or infected, please take your dog or cat to your veterinarian immediately.

Foxtail bristles are tricky, deceptive and skinny. So, please continue to monitor your dog or cat after you get inside.

### Foxtail Injury Signs in Ears

- Excessive head shaking

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- Pawing at the ear(s)
- Whimpering and pulling away when you try to pet
- Head tilt
- Redness and/or discharge coming from the ear
- If you cannot find it, definitely go to your veterinarian

### Foxtail Injury Signs in Paws

- Limping or excessive licking of paws
- Swelling of the paw or a soft, swollen lump between the toes (the lump may rupture, oozing pus)

### Foxtail Injury Signs in Nose or Inhaled

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Gagging
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden onset of bad breath
- Discharge from nose
- Definitely go to your veterinarian

### Foxtail Injury Signs in Eyes

- Swollen, red, and/or irritated eye(s)
- Squinting
- Pawing at eye, or dragging face/eye along the carpet or furniture
- Definitely go to the veterinarian

### Foxtail Injury Signs in Genitals

- Excessive licking of genitals
- Blood in urine