

# DOES YOUR GREYHOUND HAVE CORNS?

Corns are an ailment peculiar to sighthounds. Just as in humans, they are a mass of hard tissue called keratin, usually circular in shape, which can form on the foot. They can be due to pressure of the bones of the toe on the paw pad (mechanical cause) or sometimes develop as a result of an injury, such as treading on a shard of glass or a prickle. In some countries corns can also be caused by a Papilloma virus, but this has not been identified in the UK. The visible corn is just the 'tip of the iceberg' and there is much more inside the pad.



The first indication that your greyhound has a corn is likely to be lameness, in particular, lameness that appears when walking on a hard or rough surface but goes away on a soft surface such as carpet or grass. If you inspect the toes you may be able to see a circular area of a different colour and hardness; this is the corn. It can be easier to see them when the pads are wet, or you can make them visible by rubbing a small amount of toothpaste into the pad.

It may be appropriate to seek veterinary advice to assess if the corn is due to mechanical action of the foot, or a foreign body before deciding how to care for your greyhound. If a foreign body is present it may be necessary for your vet to remove this surgically. If the pad has been punctured, a corn that forms around the wound site may be eliminated long term using conservative measures. A corn resulting from mechanical pressure is like to keep recurring unless the pressure can be removed from the affected toe.



If you decide to manage the corn through conservative measures at home, there are several approaches to consider. These could include;

- Moisturising the affected pad to soften the corn, making it more comfortable. Creams intended for hard skin, or coconut oil, are common choices for this.
- Using padded boots for the dog when they are walking on hard surfaces
- Avoiding any walks on hard surfaces
- Soaking the affected foot in Epsom salts to soften the corn so it can be removed. This is called hulling. The corn sits in what is known as the 'corn bed.' Hulling removes the protruding corn from the pad, leaving the corn bed as a small indentation. This is not painful and does not cause the pad to bleed, as you are not damaging the corn bed.

It is also advisable to keep the greyhounds nails as short as possible through regular clipping or filing. If the corn is caused by mechanical pressure this is especially important, as overly long nails affect the 'balance' of the foot and exacerbate the problem. If management at home is not sufficient, a greyhound-savvy vet can offer a range of surgical treatment, listed here for completeness;

- Surgical excision of the corn requires the pad to be sliced open and the whole corn structure is removed. This can take some weeks (or months) to heal and research shows a 50% chance the corn will recur
- Amputation of the last joint of the toe, leaving the corn pad, or amputation of the whole toe. By changing the balance of the foot a corn may appear on an adjacent toe
- Flexor tenotomy (FT) is a less invasive procedure that severs two tendons leading to the toe. This stops the toe from pressing into the ground when the dog is walking or standing, thus relieving the pressure point. The corn will typically shrink or drop out of its own accord. There is anecdotal evidence that a corn may develop on another toe later, but the tenotomy can be performed on multiple toes if needed
- Superficial digital flexor tendonectomy (SDFT) is a more recent modification of FT which severs only one tendon, and may remove a section of tendon to prevent rejoining.



These last two options are currently considered the best options for your dog as they are relatively minor procedures which preserve the toe. If your vet suggests hulling under anaesthesia, surgical excision or amputation of the toe, please seek a second opinion from a vet familiar with corns and the FT and/or SDFT procedures, before making a decision.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CORNS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

- To read more, or provide information and contacts for your vet, visit the website for the Greyhound Health Initiative at <https://www.greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/corns/>
- To learn more about conservative management of corns join the Facebook group Greyhounds with corns <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Greyhoundswithcorns>
- To hear about other owners' experiences of FT/SDFT join the Facebook group Flexor Tenotomy: Greyhounds with corns <https://www.facebook.com/groups/428879307835903>