

Head Shaking and Intermittent Screaming

This August I noticed that Heidi was sometimes shaking her head. She didn't fuss much and I paid little attention until one day she also let out a short scream while shaking the head. Of course this was a Saturday night. I checked the ear on that side to see if there was sign of any external infection – nope, the skin was light pink and there was no discharge (nor matted hair). I worried I'd have to go off to the emergency clinic – an hour away – as none of the local vets provides night or weekend coverage any more in our small town.

The head shaking and screaming happened only a couple times Sunday and Heidi continued to eat OK. So Monday morning we were off first thing to the local vet. He did a complete exam and couldn't find a cause for the problem. In house lab work was normal except for platelets around 60,000; the vet said the test would have to be repeated at an outside lab to be sure if it was accurate. So we went home with a clavamox prescription for some unknown infection. After a few days, the symptoms improved a lot and there was only occasional head shaking and no screaming. But a few days later, she was back to screaming. I got an appointment on the Friday with a relatively close by referral clinic we use periodically. That exam too was normal and clavamox was continued.

By Monday Heidi was better again. It was the regular grooming day for all 3 girls (2 Beardies, 1 PWD). When I picked them up and admired the beautiful clean coats and PWD trim, the groomer said – you know Heidi wouldn't let me near her head at first, so I carefully managed to check her ear and on the very tip of her right ear was a hugely engorged TICK that I took off – that ear tip is swollen so watch it! I told him about the vet visits and inept mom exam and thanked him profusely.

At last a cause for the symptoms that had been missed by owner and two different vets. Never again will I forget to check the entire ear! Another call to the referral vet and a change of antibiotics to a cycline type and Heidi was recovered and back to her normal behaviors of escorting the school buses twice a day up and down the road from her fenced yard. I changed from advantix II to NexGuard for tick/flea control; the only possible side effect may be a little more blowing of coat by the Beardies.



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