

# Cuterebra

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Cuterebra are the larvae of the Bot fly. Adult Bot flies are large and bee like and do not bite or feed on a host animal. The female fly leaves eggs around the openings of animals' nests and where animals frequent. A female Bot fly can lay 5 – 15 eggs at every site and over 2,000 eggs in her lifetime.

Animals become infested with the eggs as they pass through these areas and the eggs hatch in response to the heat of the animal. The larva enters the body of the host animal through their mouth and nose while they are grooming themselves. The larva can occasionally enter the body through an open wound as well. The larva then travels to specific locations under the skin on the body of the host, which acts like an incubator, where they develop and breathe through an open hole in the skin. After about 30 days in the skin the larva leaves the host animal and falls to the ground to pupate, the amount of time it takes to pupate depends on environmental conditions and duration of winter.

Cuterebra are most commonly seen in the summer and fall. An area of swelling with a hole in the center is the most typical sign of a cuterebral infestation. These areas of swelling are commonly seen around the head, neck, and the front legs. Cats and dogs are not the normal host animal for cuterebra so they can migrate to places other than the skin such as the nasal passages and eyelids. The hair around these areas is often matted and cats tend to focus their grooming on these areas as well. These areas may be painful but the amount of pain depends on the animal and if there is a secondary infection present. White to yellow discharge may also be seen near the wound. Younger larva are smaller, gray to cream in color and have short rows of spines while older larva are darker, larger and are covered with spines.

The Veterinarian will examine the swollen area and watch for the cuterebra to come up to the air hole to breathe. The area will be clipped, cleaned and the doctor will then remove the larva. It is important to not remove the larva at home because damaging it can be dangerous. The cuterebra needs to be removed in one piece and cannot be squeezed out. If the cuterebra larva is damaged your pet can experience secondary infections, have chronic foreign body reactions, or have anaphylaxis reactions that can be life threatening. If pieces of the larva are left behind reoccurring abscesses can be also seen. The doctor will then flush the area to ensure that it is clean and remove any dead tissue if necessary. They may prescribe a oral or topical antibiotic as well. Once the larva is removed the area needs to heal and this can take a while.



For more information feel free to contact Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at 920-668-6212.