Secondary Bacterial Infections: The Itch/Scratch Cycle

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Many pet owners believe that scratching is normal behavior for dogs. Occassional scratching is normal, but scratching excessively or rubbing the face or flanks, and
licking at feet indicates that something is not right with your pet. Itching can be caused by any number of things from fleas, to allergies, to something that your pet has come in contact with that is irritating his skin.

Scratching the itch, although it might immediately make the pet feel better, is not beneficial in the long run. It is best to deal with itching as soon as you notice that your pet is scratching at himself. The maddening itch of irritated skin may create a cycle that your pet will find difficult to stop. And, the incessant scratching may cause your pet to abrade and irritate his skin, leaving a perfect site for bacteria to grow. Stop the scratching and you just may prevent secondary infections from taking hold.

Your goal should first be to find out what is causing the itching and deal with it. If your pet needs immediate relief and you can not get your pet to the veterinarian right away, there is something you can do to help your pet deal with the discomfort.

You may use hydrocortisone topicals such as Itch Stop Lotion, Pads, Salve, or Spray. You may choose to use a water and aloe-based product such as Septi-Soothe™ Mist or Pads or soothing petroleum-based Septi-Soothe™ Salve with Vitamin E for skin abrasions. The latter are products that contain the ingredient chlorhexidine; an antiseptic that veterinarians have relied on for years for rinsing out wounds.

Recommended Products

Drs. Foster & Smith
Itch Stop Shampoo

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Itch Stop Products

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Septi-Soothe™ Treatments

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