Flea Bites: Is your dog allergic?

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

STUDIES SHOW there are over 15 different antigens in the saliva of the flea. Each one of these antigens is capable of causing an allergic response in a sensitive dog or cat. Despite recent advances in flea control, flea bite allergies still continue to be a common problem. In fact, once your dog develops an allergy he will almost always be allergic.

Dogs that have flea allergies will bite at the base of their tail and scratch frequently. Many dogs have a characteristic loss or thinning of hair above the base of the tail. In addition, fleas or flea dirt (feces) can be found on your dog the majority of the time. The flea dirt will dissolve into a red color when moistened; this is because it is primarily digested blood. Severely affected dogs may itch over their entire bodies, have generalized hair loss, and red inflamed skin. Hot spots are often a result of flea bite allergies.

DIAGNOSIS can be made by visual signs in combination with the presence of fleas or through intradermal skin testing.

TREATMENT primarily involves preventing the flea from coming into contact with your dog and treating any existing skin issue.

STEP 1. Use a Flea and Tick Shampoo to kill existing fleas on contact.

STEP 2. Help soothe itchy, irritated skin with non-stinging Hydrocortisone products like our Itch Stop Series.

STEP 3. Try a monthly topical treatment like Bio Spot® ACTIVE CARE SPOT ON® for Dogs or K9 Advantix® II to kill fleas and ticks, as well as immature fleas.

STEP 4. Remember that good environmental treatment for fleas involves treating the house, yard, and sleeping area of the dog with a product that kills the adults (adulticide) and with an insect growth regulator.

STEP 5. Other pets in the home should also be treated, as they could continue to bring fleas into the environment.

Recommended Products

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