Hot Spots

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Controlling Hot Spots

PREVENTION IS THE KEY

here are few things as frustrating for a dog as a lesion of the skin called a hot spot. Hot spots, also known as acute moist dermatitis, are red, itchy, oozing skin infections that initially emerge as circular lesions, usually on the head, over the hip, and along the side of the chest.

Generally, they begin as an irritation to the dog's skin, such as a flea bite or a moist area where bacteria can gather. This creates an inflammatory response at the site, which leads to redness and itching. The real problem with hot spots is that they itch so much, they can drive a dog to self mutilate by scratching or biting at the irritation. A small insect bite can dramatically change into a large oozing and painful wound several inches wide in as little as six hours.

When do hot spots occur?

In many locales, it appears that hot spots are less common in the colder temperatures of winter. Many dogs develop several of these lesions over the course of their lives. However, this is generally not a long-term problem if the underlying cause is treated. A lesion may suddenly appear, be treated and be gone in less than a week. Another lesion may suddenly appear later the same summer, the next year or never be seen again on that dog.

If your dog has a hot spot now

Treatment must be directed at stopping the growth of the hot spot and eliminating the cause. In many dogs the initial cause is fleas or allergies, but lesions below the ear may indicate an ear infection, those near the hip may be related to an anal gland infection, and so on. Whatever the cause, if it can be detected, it must be treated while the hot spot is being treated.

Step by step: first aid

Since hot spots can get serious very fast, you should have your dog see a veterinarian as soon as possible. While you are waiting to bring your dog to the veterinarian, you can do

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some things to make your dog more comfortable:

- **Clip the hair** over and up to about an inch surrounding the skin lesion to allow air to get to the inflamed tissue and also to make it easier to treat.
- **Clean the area** gently with a non-irritating shampoo, such as our Septi-Soothe Shampoo or Itch Stop Shampoo. Rinse, and dry thoroughly but gently.
- **Make sure your dog** leaves the lesion alone. This may mean the use of a cone collar (an Elizabethan collar) so your dog cannot bite at the hot spot. Or, clip his nails and put socks on his feet to prevent him from scratching it.

Which dogs get hot spots?

Hot spots seem more common in dogs with heavy undercoats and/or long haircoats. Humidity and moisture may both play a role, so long-haired or heavy-coated dogs must be dried thoroughly after swimming or after a bath. Dogs with a history of allergies or ear infections, and those who are allowed to become infested with fleas, or those whose grooming needs are not met (i.e., dogs who have a lot of tangles or mats) are all predisposed to this painful condition.

What your veterinarian will do

Your veterinarian will examine your dog and look for possible causes. Tests may include skin scrapings to check for mites and other parasites, and cultures for ringworm. Your veterinarian may suggest a drying agent such as Burows Solution. If the hot spot is very painful, your dog may need to be under sedation while the area is clipped and cleansed. Your veterinarian may also prescribe an oral antibiotic and medication for the pain and inflammation. He will also help diagnose the cause of the hot spot and recommend the appropriate treatment.

Prevention

Preventing this problem is not that difficult if the underlying cause can be found. Many dogs that have repeated problems with hot spots can have the incidence greatly reduced by keeping their hair clipped short during the summer, giving them frequent medicated baths, and reducing the underlying problem through flea control, allergy management, and other preventive measures. Our recommendation for flea control is a topical flea preventive, such as Bio Spot SPOT ON for Dogs or K-9 Advantix products. Allergies should be kept under control according to your veterinarian's recommendations.

Bio Spot® SPOT ON® for Dogs

K9 Advantix®

Healthy Skin Kit

Ear Clens® Pads

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Nutritional supplements we recommend include a combination of Vitacaps, Biotin, and the topical Itch Stop. Depending on the location of the hot spot, cleaning the ears regularly and expressing the anal glands as needed may also be beneficial.

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