



Hot Spots

Also Known As: pyotraumatic dermatitis

Transmission or cause: Potential underlying causes for hot spots include parasites (especially fleas or scabies mites), allergies (flea, pollen, food), skin infections by bacteria or fungus, or trauma.



Affected Animals: Hot spots can affect dogs of any age, breed, or gender, but they occur most commonly in thickcoated/longhaired breeds, and in dogs with underlying causes such as parasites or allergies. Hot, humid weather can contribute to the development of hotspots. Hot spots occur rarely in cats.

Clinical signs: Hot spots start when a dog incessantly licks, chews or scratches a focal area of the body in response to a painful or itchy sensation. The result is a rapidly developing area of redness, hairloss, oozing and eroded skin that is often painful and infected with bacteria. Hot spots occur most frequently on the trunk, base of the tail, outer thigh, neck or face.

Diagnosis: The diagnosis of hot spot is by clinical presentation and history, and by ruling out other causes of hairloss and red skin such as skin parasites or fungal infection. Diagnostics may include close examination for fleas, skin scrapes for microscopic analysis, or fungal cultures. Additionally, it is important to identify and address the underlying cause of the hot spot, and in recurrent cases diagnostics may also include trial therapy for fleas or scabies, allergy testing, or a hypoallergenic diet trial.

Prognosis: The prognosis for cure of hot spots is good, although they will tend to recur if the underlying cause is not addressed.



Treatment: The treatment for hot spots often includes clipping and gently cleaning the affected area (this may necessitate sedation), then application of topical antibacterial and/or steroid-containing products to the area (products that contain alcohol should be avoided). Additionally, many cases need 2-3 weeks of systemic antibiotics for secondary bacterial infection, and/or a short course of oral steroids to stop self-trauma. Some dogs will need an Elizabethan collar to restrict contact with the area for several days. Treatment of the underlying cause is also important, and may include trial therapy for fleas or scabies, a hypoallergenic diet trial, or allergy hyposensitization injections based on allergy testing.

Prevention: Prevention of hotspots is done by keeping the dog clean and parasite free, and the hair coat brushed and free of mats. It is often helpful to clip long coated dogs down in the warm months. Animals with underlying allergies must have these allergies addressed to avoid hot spot recurrence.