

Hot Spots in Dogs

What are "hot spots"?

Acute moist dermatitis or "hot spots" are a common skin disorder in dogs. "Hot spots" can appear suddenly and become large red, irritated lesions in a short time.

What is the cause?

"Hot spots" are the result of intense chewing and licking. The inciting cause is often an insect bite. Fleas, ticks, biting flies and even mosquitoes have been known to cause acute moist dermatitis. Allergic skin disease can also cause or contribute to the formation of "hot spots", and is often an underlying cause if a pet develops recurrent hot spots.

What does a "hot spot" look like?

It is usually a large, raw, inflamed and bleeding area of skin. The area becomes moist and painful and begins spreading due to continued licking and chewing.

What does treatment involve?

The underlying cause should be identified and treated, if possible. Flea and tick preventives should be applied at the time of treatment. Anti-inflammatory medications and antibiotics, as injectable, oral, or topical preparations, are often used to relieve the intense itching and to combat secondary skin infection. The area is usually clipped and cleaned to facilitate applying any sprays or ointments on the affected area. Protective collars (Elizabethan- or E-collars) are often used to prevent the dog from further licking and injuring the site while healing occurs.

What is the prognosis?

Good with treatment. The condition usually resolves as rapidly as it developed.

Is the condition likely to recur?

Unfortunately, dogs that have "hot spots" are likely to experience recurrences. Flea control and proper bathing and grooming are your best defenses against future "hot spots". Dogs that experience chronic "hot spots" should be tested for hypothyroidism and skin and food allergies.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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