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Hot Spots

Hot spots are also known as **acute moist pyoderma**. They are moist, pus-producing, painful and itchy patches of **deep skin infection**, commonly seen in dogs during the summer months. Hot spots occur suddenly, with skin lesions enlarging rapidly as your pet scratches the itchy area, breaks the skin, and infection escalates. Often the infected area will spread out sideways under the hair – and the area can become very large without owners realising – sometimes **doubling its size in 24 hours**. Hot spots are generally very itchy even before they become obvious, and dogs can become quite unwell, with high temperature and loss of appetite.

Hot spots occur frequently on the face, head and jowls, but may occur anywhere. Many factors – insect bites, allergies, small wounds or regular swimming – can make **skin susceptible to infection**. Generally rump hot spots are associated with flea allergy or sore anal glands, and face/head lesions with infections or allergy. They are particularly **common in hot humid weather**, when there are more insects about, skin allergies are worse, dogs are swimming more and also when there is a higher level of humidity.

Golden Retrievers, Saint Bernards, Rottweilers, Labradors & Newfoundlands are predisposed and heavy-coated breeds also seem more prone, however **all types of dogs can develop hot spots**.

Treatment

Treatment involves **clipping and cleaning** the infected area and **antibiotic treatment**, often a long course (2-3 weeks). Clipping reveals the extent of the hot spot lesion and allows it to dry out as well as allowing effective cleaning and topical (surface) application of medications or antiseptic washes. Medications applied to the surface of a hair-matted scab will not work – the infection will continue to develop under the dry scab. **Early treatment** of is best before the infected area has got very large, and the dog starts to feel sick from the infection.

Prevention

Shampoo with a suitable antiseptic – such as Pyohex or Mediderm can help to prevent the occurrence of hot spots if used regularly. These shampoos can sometimes be useful in the treatment of hot spots due to their antiseptic action. **Omega 3 fatty acid** supplementation (adding a product such as 'Dermega' to the food) can also help improve the skin's resistance to hot spots. Managing or avoiding other **risk factors**, such as drying well after bathing and swimming can also help.

Any cases not responding, or recurring once medication has stopped, should be reassessed for deeper skin infection, poor control of allergic causes such as fleas, food or environmental allergies, and other contributing skin problems such as mange mites. Cases continuing into the winter months should be checked for food allergy as well as winter allergens e.g. house dust mites. Severe and unresponsive cases may require referral to a veterinary dermatologist to determine the underlying factor causing recurrent infections.