

Pawsitive Press

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Common Skin Conditions
By: Dr. Patrick Hafner

Skin disease is a very common in our canine companions. It is more common in dogs than in the feline population. There are several categories of skin abnormalities that affect dogs. Many of the various skin conditions we treat here at the hospital are either completely cured or controlled with proper treatment. Here are some of questions we frequently answer.

What are “immune-mediated” skin disorders?



The most frequently treated immune-mediated skin disorder in the canine is Canine Atopic skin disease. This condition occurs when the immune system become over active and reacts to different components of the environment causing itch, licking, scratching or chewing of the feet, face and body. There are numerous things that cause a reaction from the immune system of the dog. Examples of these reactive substances are fleas,



pollen, molds, grasses, trees, plants and dust-mites. Atopic allergy can become a long term chronic disease that requires constant attention. If we are able to decrease or eliminate the reactive substance from the environment of the dog we can control the allergic response and return to normal.

In Florida it is very difficult in most cases to eliminate the problem because these substances are everywhere. Besides reduction or elimination of these offending substances from the environment there are three major ways to treat this condition. First is by allergy desensitization where blood is drawn to find out to what our patient is reacting. With a series of allergy injections over many months the immune system is “retrained” to react in a different manner to these substances. This halts the reactive process and the clinical symptoms mentioned hopefully above go away. Second, we will

treat symptomatically with antibiotics if infection is present and also may use a steroid to reduce the biting, scratching, licking and chewing that we see.

Two of the newest approaches to controlling atopic allergy in dogs only is a more targeted approach to stop inflammation created by a specific inflammatory substance produced in the body of the allergic patient. Inflammation is triggered in the body by compounds know as inflammatory cytokines. Apoquel and Cytopoint are used to block the production or eliminate interleukin 131 in the body. Cytopoint is an injection that can be given as often as monthly to control this inflammatory process. In some cases we are able to use the injection on an as needed basis spreading subsequent injections over a longer period of time.

Cytopoint is an antibody that searches for interleukin 131 and destroys the substance to prevent inflammatory stimulation. Side effects of Cytopoint have been minimal.

The second novel approach to controlling atopic allergy in our canine companions is with a medication called Apoquel. This is an oral medication given twice daily initially then reduced in most cases to once daily.

Skin Cont'd

Apoquel is uniquely targeted to stop the itch and inflammation associated with allergic skin disease. It is a selective inhibitor of the Janus kinase (JAK) 1 enzyme, a protein that is integral to the signaling pathway that results in itching and inflammation. Its novel mechanism of action on the JAK enzymes is specifically designed to target the itching and inflammatory pathways involved in the itch cycle, allowing control of the signs of allergic disease.

Current treatments for allergic skin disease are limiting. In acute and chronic cases of allergic dermatitis, steroids may effectively reduce pruritus, but the short- and long-term side effects (including polydipsia, polyphagia, polyuria, pancreatitis, gastrointestinal ulceration, lipidemias, diabetes, muscle wasting and iatrogenic Cushing's syndrome) and intricate dosing schedules can be challenging.

The approval of APOQUEL provides a much-needed, new, targeted treatment choice for dogs that suffer from allergic skin conditions and affords the damaged skin an opportunity to heal. Side effects to Apoquel have also been minimal but as in any newly introduced medication if you were to see any change in behavior or alterations in activity level or appetite you would want to discuss these signs with your prescribing doctor.

What are hot spots?



Hot spots are technically called moist traumatic dermatitis. These intense, moist weeping areas come initially from some irritation that becomes infected with staphylococcal bacteria that normally reside on the skin. These bacteria take advantage of this heat, moisture and breakdown of the top layers of the skin from trauma by scratching, licking or biting. A hot spot is like a brush fire turning into a forest fire in a matter of hours. This condition is treated with steroids, antibiotics, topical applications, clipping, cleaning and drying the affected area. Care must be taken to stop the trauma caused by the patient to the area involved. Anything that makes a dog itch can lead to a hot spot.

What is an acral lick granuloma?



This is a condition frequently seen in dogs on their legs. This begins as small irritation on legs that causes the dog to lick excessively to the point the top layer of the skin is devoid of hair and an ulcerated red and raw area is created. These areas are difficult to cure because there is an obsessive-compulsive nature to these lesions once they are created. There are many ways to treat these lesions. No one treatment effectively treats all of these cases. Antibiotics, topical preparations, antidepressants and covering the lesion to prevent the licking are some of the techniques utilized.

What is the difference between sarcoptic and demodectic mange?

Both of these conditions are caused by a mite that invades the skin of our canine patients. The majority of demodex cases are in younger dogs. This condition is not contagious to other dogs or people. This is frequently called "red mange". The vast majority of these cases are easily treated with some exceptions. Sarcoptic mange is another skin mite that can be found in dogs of all ages. One important difference here is that sarcoptic mange is contagious to both other dogs and to people. So, it is important to differentiate the type of mange that a patient has. Fortunately, sarcoptic mange is easily treated and eliminated when diagnosed properly.



Demodex skin mite



Sarcoptic mange mite

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