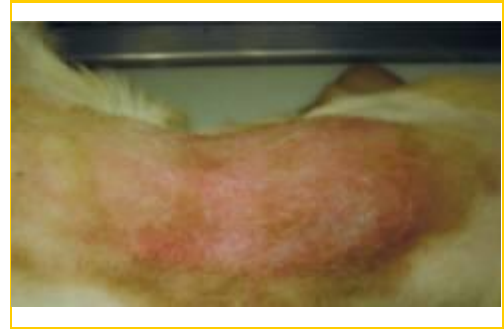
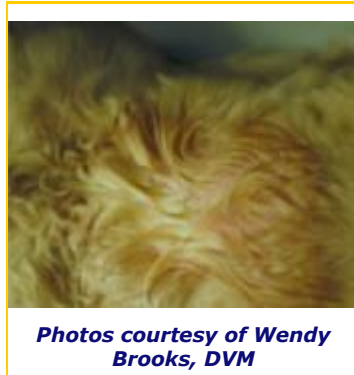


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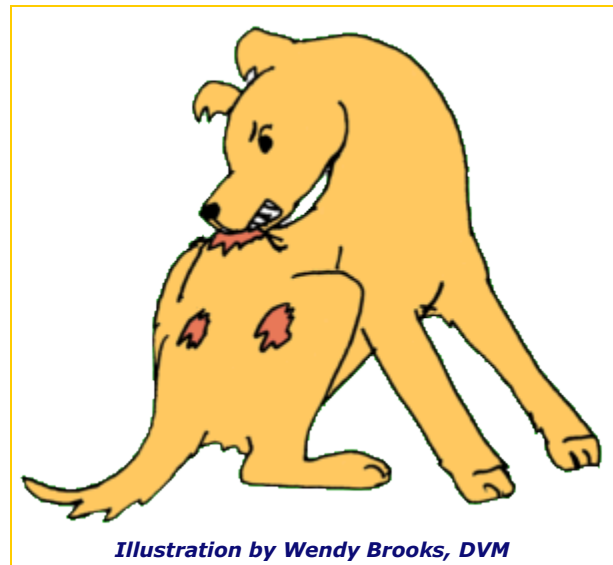
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Hot Spots (Pyotraumatic Dermatitis)



What are Hot Spots?

In warm weather, one of the things veterinarians can count on is seeing more dogs with hot spots. These areas are weepy, wet, red and sometimes bloody when they are fresh, and dry and scabby when they are resolving. They can cover large expanses of the dog's skin, can appear as solitary lesions or in multiple locations, but are generally well defined. They are caused by over-zealous self-licking and chewing (the dog creates them) and they can arise quickly: 10 minutes of chewing can create a big one. The good news is that they almost always look worse than they are. The infection is actually quite superficial and often will resolve with topical treatment alone. The bad news is that about 30% of the pets presented for hot spots actually have some other kind of skin disease such as a deeper skin infection, bite wound or other trauma, or even immune-mediated ulceration. If you aren't entirely sure about what a hot spot looks like, it is probably best to have the veterinarian look at it.



What Causes Hot Spots?

The dog causes the hot spot by self-chewing and licking. What causes the pet to self-chew and lick is another story. The dog may have an allergy, may have come in contact with an irritating substance, may have irritation from a grooming clipper, or may have some pain in the area from underlying tissues. Anything that makes the dog itch will make the dog lick and chew, and if the licking and chewing is obsessive enough, a hot spot will soon follow.

First Aid

The basics of hot spot treatment are:

- Keep the dog from licking the area.
- Promote drying of the moist skin.
- Alleviate the itching that started the whole thing in the first place.

Smaller hot spots can be treated at home with over-the-counter products made for this use. The important thing is to be aware that these areas are tender and the pet may bite if you attempt to put something on the area that stings. Also, be careful about using human topical products as these may be toxic to pets when licked and ingested. Zinc oxide, for example, can be toxic when ingested and it is a common carrier in many human skin ointments.



Photo courtesy of Wendy Brooks, DVM

When to See the Veterinarian

Sometimes a hot spot is big and requires clipping to dry it properly. Sometimes there are so many hot spots arising that topical treatment becomes impractical. Sometimes a hot spot is accompanied by deeper skin infection elsewhere or an ear infection, either of which would require more extensive therapy. Hot spots just under the ear or on the facial cheek, for example, are notorious for covering up a deeper skin infection below and often require more extensive treatment, especially in Golden retrievers. More extensive treatments might include oral corticosteroids and/or oral antibiotics in addition to topical antiseptics and anti-inflammatories.

Good flea control is important for any itchy pet and is the foundation of itch prevention. Always be sure you have flea control secured in the approach to any itchy pet.

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