

Pyotraumatic Dermatitis

Also Called:

- Hot Spot
- Moist Dermatitis

What is pyotraumatic dermatitis?

Pyotraumatic dermatitis refers to a skin condition more commonly known as a hot spot. It is very itchy, painful skin condition of dogs that may develop in a matter of minutes. Incessant biting, licking, or scratching at the affected area usually accompanies hot spots. This leads to a vicious cycle because itching and scratching probably cause the hot spot to develop in the first place.

What do hot spots look like?

A hot spot is a round, red, tender, area of skin covered by matted, moist hair. It may develop so rapidly that it measures several inches in diameter by the time you notice it. One or more hot spots can be found at one time, and most develop on the rump, neck, and face.

Please note that the term "hot spot" is sometimes used to refer to various types of infections of the skin, such as pyoderma - but these conditions are quite different from the true "hot spot" described here.

What causes hot spots?

Hot spots are caused by the same type of bacteria that normally live in small numbers on the surface of the skin. This type of infection is not usually contagious to human or other dogs. It develops when scratching and biting disrupt the normal barrier function of the skin and allow the bacteria to overgrow. Once the bacteria proliferate, they cause even more irritation and pain. Dense-coated dogs such as Golden Retrievers are predisposed to developing hot spots, probably because of poor ventilation in their coats. What causes the irritation that initiates a hot spot? Most often, hot spots develop at the site of a fleabite. There may be no other evidence of fleas on the patient. Less common causes include allergies, ear infections, anal sac problems, plant material in the coat, and other irritants. Hot spots most often arise during hot, humid weather.

How are hot spots diagnosed?

The diagnosis of hot spots is quite simple due to the rapid onset and distinctive appearance of this condition. We sometimes perform a microscopic examination of the

skin to rule out similar conditions or a bacterial culture if the response to treatment is poor.

How are hot spots treated?

Clipping the hair overlying the hot spot and cleaning the surface of the infected skin are the most important components of therapy. Sedation is occasionally needed because the skin can be so painful. Once the hot spot is clipped, it should be cleansed once or twice daily. A plastic "Elizabethan collar" may be needed to prevent your dog from chewing at the hot spot while it is healing.

Many dogs need additional treatments to ensure more rapid resolution of the hot spot. We may prescribe an antibiotic/anti-inflammatory spray to use on the skin, and oral or injectable medications to rapidly resolve the infection. If we do prescribe a medicated spray, please use it no longer than the recommended period. Most importantly, an effective flea medication should be used to protect against this common parasite.

Individual hot spots are usually simple to treat. If the hot spots are a recurrent problem, however, we may recommend further testing or therapy to spare your dog the discomfort of this painful skin condition.