

UNDER THE WEATHER

Summer Brings Hot Spots

Come summer, and every veterinary clinic sees several dogs with hot spots. A hot spot is a hairless patch of skin which is swollen, moist and warm. The patch is 1 to 4" and is itchy and painful. It exudes pus and gives off a foul odour. The dog licks and chews the site, causing the skin to develop an infection. These circular patches appear suddenly and enlarge quickly, often within a matter of hours. Pet parents are often surprised to see a large, painful patch appear on their pets body overnight. These are the hot spots of summer.

Hot spots may be seen anywhere on the body, but are common in the neck area, just below the ears and on the thighs. Breeds with double coats or thick, long coats are predisposed to this ailment. When the weather starts turning hot, most animals start a seasonal shedding of their coats. These dead hairs get trapped close to the skin. The moisture thus trapped next to the skin makes it a perfect spot for bacterial and fungal overgrowth, and this infection makes the dog itch. The itching and self mutilation that follows only aggravates the condition and the area becomes extremely raw and painful.

Ticks, fleas, mites and other skin parasites contribute to and further aggravate the problem. Dogs who have existing skin allergies are more susceptible. Grooming is extremely important. In our dusty environment it is important to bathe your dog regularly in order to wash away dust, dirt and debris. Ear infections can also cause the pet to vigorously scratch his ears, so make sure they are clean. While bathing, it is important to ensure



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that shampoo does not enter the ears, since the detergent in shampoo can cause itching and inflammation in the ear canal. Anal glands should be checked and evacuated regularly, specially if your pet tends to scoot (rub his/her backside against the ground).

Treatment: Hot spots are extremely painful. Treatment involves clipping hair in that area so that the skin is exposed to air. This is very important to help healing. Sometimes the pet may have to be sedated to do this, since the skin is very tender in that area. Once the hair in that area is clipped or shaved, the hot spot is treated with local applications. Your veterinarian will prescribe a cleaning solution, usually povidone iodine, as well as antibiotic and anti-inflammatory skin creams, lotions or sprays. Do not use powders in that area, the talc used as a base in antiseptic powders may worsen the itching. A soothing oatmeal shampoo is prescribed for the whole body for a weekly bath to soothe skin. If there are several hot spots or the infection is severe, a medicated antiseptic shampoo may be prescribed. Antibiotics may be prescribed for severe infection. Antihistamine or steroid tablets are also prescribed to address itching. Some dogs may need an Elizabeth collar for a few days to prevent them scratching or biting the area.

In hot, humid weather, be sure to dry your heavy coated dog thoroughly after bathing and after swims. Keep your pet free from skin infections and parasites. Otherwise, the conditions are perfect for a hot spot to develop. 



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