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## **Hot Spots or Active Moist Dermatitis**

A hot spot is a raw, moist sore on a dog's skin, usually surrounded by matted fur. A hot spot or active moist dermatitis is caused when populations of normal skin bacteria grow and overwhelm normal resistance. These usually appear as circular lesions, typically on the head, chest or near the rump but can appear anywhere. These lesions are moist, raw, inflamed and hairless, and can be quite painful. You may notice your pet licking, biting or scratching at the area.

### **What causes Hot Spots?**

Hot spots can be caused by a variety of things, though occur more frequently in summer. Anything that irritates or breaks the skin can create the environment for bacterial contamination.

Long haired dogs are more predisposed to this condition, as their coat can trap moisture and allow for bacteria to proliferate. A hot spot can sometimes be associated with long, matted fur or a lack of grooming.

The initial wound may be caused due to an irritant or allergen in the environment that causes your dog to itch. This may be due to fleas, food allergy or other environmental nuisances such as dust or pollen.

### **Treatment of Hot Spots**

If you notice a hot spot, or find your pet to be scratching please book an appointment for your pet as soon as possible for treatment. The goal of treatment is to clean the wound and prevent further traumatizing of the area. If the hot spot is large, it may be necessary to sedate your pet to minimize discomfort during clipping and cleaning.

The first step in treating hot spots is to clip the hair over and surrounding the lesion. This allows air to get into the site and prevents the fur from creating a warm moist environment for the bacteria to proliferate in. The surface of the hot spot is then cleaned with a non-irritating solution. To prevent traumatizing the area further, Elizabethan head collars may be recommended. A topical or oral steroid may be prescribed to help manage the itching and inflammation. In severe cases, antibiotics may be recommended to help fight secondary bacterial infection.

Daily cleaning of the hot spot, can help to speed up the healing process.

### **How can I prevent Hot Spots?**

Many dogs that have a predisposition to hot spots can have the incidence greatly reduced by keeping their hair clipped short during summer, bathing them regularly and drying thoroughly, and by following a strict flea control program.

**If your pet is frequently having hot spots, it is recommended to determine the cause for the break in the skin barrier, this may require further diagnostic tests, such as a food trial or allergy testing.**