

Heathcote Veterinary Clinic

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Hospital Hours
Monday to Friday 9.00am – 7.00pm
Saturday from 9.00am
Sunday 9.00am – 12.00pm

Hotspots

What is a hotspot?

A hotspot is an infection caused by trauma to the skin known to veterinarians as pyotraumatic dermatitis.

How do they happen?

It is often thought an insect bite or a scratch is the initial cause. Bacteria live on the skin in small numbers, but when the skin's defence system is breached, by biting or scratching, the bacteria quickly colonize and proliferate.

Dogs most susceptible to hotspots:

- breeds with heavy, thick coats
- histories of allergies, ear infections, flea infestations, irritated anal sacs, and grooming problems (tangles and mats)
- those not dried properly after swimming or bathing are at risk.
- those in warm, humid climates may develop hot spots when they shed their undercoats if the dead hair is trapped next to the skin.
- behaviour problems may also lead to hotspots from trauma due to licking and thus encourage an infection to become established.

What do hotspots look like?

They are generally circular patches of hair loss. They can be swollen, may have pus, and are painfully itchy. This causes the dog to scratch, lick, or bite to the point of self-mutilation. These troublesome sores can seem to arise in a matter of hours with no warning, but they do tend to follow a pattern that helps in predicting their occurrence.

The most common locations for hot spots are under collars, the legs and feet, chest, flanks, and rump — areas that can be reached by licking or biting.

How are they treated?

- The fur from the affected area is clipped so that air can circulate and an antibacterial solution is used to wash the affected skin.
- A course of anti-inflammatories and 2-3 weeks of antibiotics will be prescribed.
- It is very important to return for scheduled revisits to have your pet checked, if antibiotic treatment is stopped too early the infection can easily flare up again just as bad, or worse than before.
- Dogs who experience recurrent hot spots over a number of months will need to be tested for thyroid disease.

How can I prevent them?

Tangled or matted fur? Put the dog on a regular grooming schedule either at home or at a grooming salon. Breeds with long hair that tangles easily should be groomed at least twice a week so that snarls and mats do not form. Never bathe a dog with matted or tangled hair — comb the snarls out first. Clip mats if you cannot easily comb them out. Grooming should be scheduled every 4-6 weeks.

Allergies causing the problem? Begin an aggressive campaign to rid your home and yard of fleas. Household dust, plant pollen, lawn chemicals, and diet can all cause allergies or can build to a crescendo of allergies if the dog's sensitivities cross a threshold. Frequent vacuuming, supplements to keep the skin and coat healthy, air purifiers, and baths using medicated shampoos with aloe, oatmeal, jojoba, or eucalyptus can help. Next step is over-the-counter antihistamines, our vets have a list of products to try with appropriate doses for your pet.