

HOT SPOTS

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[Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of information. However, this is not a substitute for prompt veterinary care. Any similarity to other publications is unintentional. Published online at Sealyhealthguard.org, 11/23/10]

A hot spot, also known as moist dermatitis or pyotraumatic dermatitis, is an open wound caused by excessive biting, licking or scratching. It appears suddenly and worsens rapidly. Hot spots can be more prevalent in some breeds, but any dog with a thick coat living in a hot, humid climate can be at risk.

Often dogs with sensitive skin, allergies and flea bite dermatitis are more susceptible. Hot spots begin as a skin irritation which creates an inflammatory response. The problem occurs when the dog won't leave the area alone. It becomes inflamed, intensely itchy, is often painful and can become infected. The area will be red and oozing, usually with hair loss.

Call your vet immediately, as any infection present in the area can become deep and spread quickly. Your veterinarian will gently clean the area and trim the hair to expose the edges of the sore. A muzzle may be necessary because of the pain of the wound. The vet will probably prescribe oral antibiotics, possibly anti-inflammatory medications and topical drying agents (such as Burrow's solution - aluminum acetate - available over the counter at your pharmacy) and instruct you on how to continue care at home. This may include cool compresses.

Ask your vet before applying any topical ointments or creams. They may be toxic if ingested or prevent the wound from drying properly. Your vet may also give your dog an Elizabethan collar or recommend the dog wear socks to prevent further biting or scratching. Your vet may also take a skin scratching to test for parasites such as mites or ringworm. He/she will talk with you to try to discover the underlying cause in order to prevent further occurrences.

Regular grooming, including cleaning the ears, emptying anal glands and removing excess undercoat is always beneficial and should be part of your Sealy's routine anyway. Flea and allergy management can be discussed with your vet. Dry your dog thoroughly after a swim or a bath.

If you notice your dog suddenly biting or scratching excessively, investigate right away to prevent the hot spot before it starts.

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