

Hot Spot Factsheet

Hot spots, otherwise known as acute moist dermatitis, or pyotraumatic dermatitis, are a common occurrence in dogs. They are a localised area of skin inflammation and can become itchy. They occur more frequently under certain conditions, and in certain breeds of dogs, and while not immediately life-threatening, Hot Spots are quite uncomfortable for the dog and can develop rapidly, going from something the size of a 10 cent piece to the size of a small dinner plate in a matter of hours. Early intervention is the best way to help your dog if they ever have a Hot Spot, so let's investigate the facts about Hot Spots in detail.

What Are Hot Spots?

Hot spots are a common skin condition that affects thousands of dogs in Australia every year. A hot spot is a localised area of skin infection, called superficial pyoderma or pyotraumatic dermatitis. It is a superficial skin infection that results when the normal skin bacteria overruns the skin's defenses as a result of damage to the skin surface.

Initially, the skin will become moist and inflamed, and pus often oozes from the damaged skin as bacterial infection sets in. The dried pus and damaged skin will crust over and the dog will often lose hair over the infection site.

They can appear very quickly (within a couple of hours) and can cause a great deal of irritation. Both dogs and cats can get them, although they are more common in dogs.

What does a Hot Spot look like?

Hot Spots are red, moist and usually roughly circular. They will be warm to the touch, and very itchy for a dog. Hot spots can also ooze pus and have a bad odour. Hair loss from around the infected area is common but doesn't occur in all cases.

Because dog hot spots are so irritating many dogs will bite, lick or scratch the area which causes the infection to spread and the wound will become larger in size.

Signs of a Hot Spot

Wet spots of hair
Matted hair that looks like it is slicked down in a 'round' shaped area
Red and moist skin
Your pet scratching and licking at one particular area constantly.

What causes Hot Spots?

Moisture – A common cause for hot spots is moisture getting caught next to the dog's skin, making an ideal spot for an infection to start. Moisture can become trapped by matted fur, a dog collar, or simply thick fur.

Irritation – Anything that causes irritation to the skin! Hot Spots can start from any other issue that cause the dog to scratch including ear infections, eye problems, skin parasites such as fleas, dental disease or allergies to food or environment. Once the itching starts, it becomes a self-reinforcing cycle so that even if the initial stimulus is removed, the skin irritation remains.

Weather conditions – They are more common during hot, humid weather (but can occur all year around)

Allergies – Many times chronic dog hot spots stem from an allergic condition.

Pre-disposition – Some dogs are simply more prone to hot spots than others due to their coats, their breed, their love of water, or a combination of all of those things. Whilst they are not breed specific, they are more common in thick-coated breeds such as Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, and Rottweilers.

Where are Hot Spots most likely to occur?

They generally occur around the head, neck, rump and occasionally around the trunk of the body, but they can occur anywhere. The location of the hot spot will often help your Vet identify if there is an obvious underlying cause, for example a hot spot near their ear could mean that they have an ear infection and are rubbing the general area to alleviate the irritation in their ear, causing localized skin issues where the rubbing occurs.

How do you treat a Hot Spot?

See your veterinarian as soon as you notice it, because the more that your dog licks and scratches at it, the bigger and bigger it will get! The important thing is to stop the scratching so that the spot can heal. Your vet will be able to look to see if there is an underlying cause, and often they will shave around the area to help the area stay dry and assist in treatment applications.

Treatment may include medications such as a topical cream to apply to the Hot Spot directly, anti-inflammatory to reduce itching, and antibiotics to treat any infection. It may be a good idea to invest in an Elizabethan collar (otherwise known as the head bucket) to prevent your dog from licking or scratching the area and allow it to heal properly.

Can the Pet Resort prevent a Hot Spot from occurring?

Unfortunately, no! As we have seen, they occur due to any number of factors that are outside of the control of the boarding facility. The best that a good pet boarding facility can do is be on the lookout for the early signs of a Hot Spot starting, as they can spread very rapidly from the first onset

Key Takeaways:

Hot Spots a common skin condition that cannot be prevented Hot Spots can spread in size rapidly! The best thing is early detection and intervention when a Hot Spot starts to develop.