

My dog has a **HOT SPOT.** Now what?

Find out what's going on with your dog's skin lesion and what you can expect from your visit to the veterinarian.

What is it?

A hot spot is a raw, moist sore on a dog's skin, usually surrounded by matted fur. The sore occurs when a dog persistently licks, bites, scratches or chews an area on his body, causing significant damage to the skin and ultimately, an oozing sore. Since flea allergy is the most common cause of hot spots, these lesions are most commonly found on the rump or near the tail.

What causes it?

Most often, these wounds are due to some sort of irritant or allergen in the environment that causes a dog to itch, such as fleas, food or treats, or other environmental nuisances, like dust or pollen. Sometimes hot spots can be associated with matted fur or a lack of proper grooming.

What should I do if I see a hot spot?

Take your pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Hot spots are very uncomfortable and painful for your pet, so medical intervention is warranted. Remember, a hot spot is usually a symptom of a larger problem, so your veterinarian will also want to find the underlying cause, if possible.

What should I expect during my pet's exam?

1. Your veterinarian will ask questions to find out whether your dog has had any previous skin or ear disease and if so, whether the problem flares up year-round or seasonally.
2. He or she will perform a thorough physical exam, inspecting both the hot spot and other areas of your

pet's body that could show signs of irritation.

3. Your veterinarian may also run a flea comb through your dog's fur, perform a skin scraping to look for mites or sample some of the wound material to look for bacterial contamination.

How will the wound be treated?

The goal of treatment is to clean the wound and keep the pet from further traumatizing the area. Your veterinarian may clip your dog's fur around the hot spot and remove any fur or crust from the wound. If the hot spot is large, your pet may need to be sedated to minimize discomfort. An injectable drug may be given or a local anesthetic may be applied to the affected area as well. Your veterinarian may also send you home with:

- > instructions for cleaning the wound
- > a special collar to keep your pet from further damaging the area
- > a topical or oral steroid to manage the itching and inflammation
- > a flea preventive.

Will the hot spot return?

If the underlying cause hasn't been found and controlled, your pet could experience another hot spot in the future. But before more advanced diagnostics, such as a food trial or allergy testing can be performed, your veterinarian will want to understand the pattern of your pet's hot spots—when they occur (if recurrent) and how often. That's why it's so important to keep in touch with your veterinarian when skin problems arise and bring your pet in for an examination when necessary.