

Don't PANIC about your pet's skin



Pets' skin conditions can drive an entire household a little crazy with the constant biting, licking and SO. MUCH. SCRATCHING. But if your pet is suffering from a skin problem, there's hope. Here are the top 4 things you need to know about your furry friend's skin.

Dermatology cases are no walk in the park—in fact, it might surprise you to know there are over 160 skin conditions that affect dogs, ranging from curable to incurable. Veterinarians need to understand what is really happening to and within the skin before appropriate therapeutic strategies can be employed. Since it takes a new, healthy skin cell about four weeks to mature and be present near the skin surface, even curable skin diseases may take weeks to resolve. For the incurable cases, controlling an ongoing skin disorder through selected diets, medications, shampoos, sprays, fatty acids and vitamin supplements is the often the best we can do for our pets.

But before you panic about how to handle your pet's skin condition, review the most important things pet owners should know about skin conditions:

1 Some skin conditions are zoonotic. What does this mean? Well, whatever's causing your pooch to scratch may be the same thing that's bothering *your* skin. And you should know: The veterinarian's first priority is ensuring human health above all else. When some pets' skin conditions are ignored or not addressed immediately, there is a risk of transmission to humans. So if you suspect something is troubling your pet, see your veterinarian in a hurry.

2 It is important to use antibiotics responsibly. Antibiotics are not recommended for every skin infection. It is imperative that when your veterinarian prescribes an antibiotic, you finish the entire prescription. Do not try to give a few pills leftover from last year when your pet has a skin flare-up—not only is this practice unsafe, it can also build the bacteria's natural resistance to antibiotics. Together we can reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance.

3 Ear infections are usually due to allergies. For a pet that has more than two ear infections in the past year, it is important to ask the why and discuss what could be the underlying triggers with your veterinary team.

4 Many allergies can be managed. Allergies don't have to be treated with barrage of steroids and antibiotics each time. There are many tools available to treat and manage allergies in pets. It is important to discuss a game plan with your veterinarian so you can be sure your pet is getting the best dermatologic care possible.