UNDERSTANDING “HOT SPOTS”

**What are “Hot Spots”?**

Pyotraumatic dermatitis commonly known as “Hot Spots” are bacterial infections of the skin associated with inflammation. It can be extremely uncomfortable for the animal.

**What are the main causes of “Hot Spots”?**

- Commonly caused by *Staphylococcus intermedius* bacteria.
- Skin infections occur when the surface integrity of the skin has been broken.
- The skin has become macerated by chronic exposure to moisture.
- Normal bacterial flora have been altered.
- Circulation has been impaired.

**What are the risk factors?**

- Allergies e.g. fleas, food.
- Parasites, especially *Demodex* mites.
- Fungal infections.
- Endocrine diseases e.g. hypothyroidism, sex hormone imbalance.
- Immune incompetency, especially in young animals.
- Conformation e.g. coat length, skin folds.
- Trauma due to grooming, scratching or irritants.
- Foreign bodies e.g. thorns, grass awns.
What is the treatment for “Hot Spots”?

- Your veterinarian will most likely clip or shave the hair from the affected area.
- The affected area may then be washed with an appropriate shampoo.
- The lesion can then be dried and a suitable ointment applied.
- These ointments may contain antibiotics to eliminate the surface bacteria as well as an anti-inflammatory to alleviate pain and inflammation.
- In certain cases it may be necessary to put your pet on a course of oral anti-inflammatories and/ or antibiotics.
- In most cases the skin will return to normal condition within 7-10 days.
- It is important to identify and remove any of the predisposing causes to prevent recurrence.

Are certain pets more prone to developing “Hot Spots”?

- Certain dog breeds with thick coats such as Rottweilers, Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, German Shepherds and St. Bernards tend to be more prone to “Hot Spots”.
- “Hot Spots” tend to be more common in warm, humid climates.

What preventative measures can you as the owner take to prevent “Hot Spots” occurring in your pets?

- Ensure proper flea control.
- Avoid having the animal spend excessive amounts of time swimming.
- Groom long-haired dogs regularly.
- Avoid sudden changes and extreme variations of your pet’s normal diet.

Acknowledgement of pictures: www.thepetcenter.com