

Summer skin irritations



Article brought to you by Dr Alice Marshall, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

After months observing social distancing and lockdown rules, summer is here, and we are all yearning to get outside. With a few simple tips, we can ensure our pets enjoy the outdoors without itchy summer skin.

Signs to look for

Your pets' skin, especially sparsely haired areas (their underbelly, armpits and toes), can become itchy and irritable after time outside, especially in warmer weather. Your pet may chew, scratch, overly groom or even drag these areas along the ground to get some relief.

COMMON SKIN IRRITATIONS

Flea allergy

Fleas are the number one cause of skin allergies in our dogs and cats. Their bites irritate the skin, and our pet's constant chewing and licking cause the irritation to grow. Due to the flea lifecycle, year-round flea protection is ideal.

Contact (grass) allergy

Dogs with grass allergies suffer several uncomfortable symptoms. They chew, lick and bite inflamed areas of skin – usually their feet, legs and underbelly. These symptoms are caused by grass pollens, either inhaled or through direct contact.

Hotspots

A 'hot spot' is a patch of moist, irritated skin. Repeated licking, biting, and scratching of one area can cause hot spots to develop in both cats and dogs. The broken, irritated skin becomes inflamed quickly and is often complicated by bacterial growth. Bacterial growth and infection make the hot spot even itchier. Most hot spots are caused by an underlying irritation to the skin, such as fleas, ear infections or allergies (mainly food and inhalant allergies).

Ear infections

Brown discharge or redness in your pet's ears or repeated head shaking can all indicate ear problems. Your

pet's skin also covers the inside of their ears, so ear issues could be linked to skin irritations.

Swimming and the onset of warm, humid weather can also increase the likelihood of hot spots and ear infections.

Keep your pet clean and groomed

Keeping your pet cleaned and groomed can help reduce the occurrence of hot spots and other summer skin conditions. Regular grooming sessions are also an excellent way for you to check in on their skin condition and notice any changes before they become issues. As the largest organ in their body, keeping your pet's fur and skin in top condition is often best for their overall health.

If your pet does develop a skin condition in the summer months, do not worry. They are common, and with the right care and advice from your professional team, they are often very treatable.

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