

Hot Spots (Acute Moist Dermatitis)

DEFINITION

Hot spots (acute moist dermatitis, pyotraumatic dermatitis) is a localized area of severe redness and exudation in skin that is traumatized by licking, scratching, or rubbing.

CAUSE

There is no single cause or etiology, but rather multiple factors that predispose to the development of hot spots. Some of these factors include: acute focal inflammation resulting from allergic conditions, such as atopic dermatitis, allergic contact dermatitis, flea bite and other parasite hypersensitivities; skin maceration due to continued wetting or accumulation of moisture under a thick coat; trauma due to abrasions, foreign bodies in the coat, or irritation from clipper blades; and a primary irritant contacting the skin. Serum exudation from the inflammatory process creates a favorable climate for bacterial overgrowth and surface infection.



CLINICAL FEATURES

Lesions are noted more frequently during hot, humid weather. Animals are presented because they are persistently licking or scratching a particular area, which can vary in size and is generally sharply demarcated. The areas most commonly involved are the head and hips. Affected skin is red, and moist. The typical lesion will evidence hair loss. However, hair may still cover the lesion if it is detected early or if it is in a location that is difficult to lick or scratch. Abrasions of the skin are occasionally present due to licking or scratching. The surrounding skin should be carefully checked for satellite lesions.



DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSES

- Calcium deposits in the skin
- Superficial burn
- Irritant contact dermatitis
- Flea bite hypersensitivity
- Allergies (atopic dermatitis)
- Deep bacterial infection

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Diagnosis is generally made on the clinical appearance of lesions and a history of predisposing factors. Impression smears and/or culture may be appropriate for determination of the number and type of bacteria, and also to determine which antibiotics would be appropriate for treatment.

MANAGEMENT

If the lesions are painful or the animal is fractious, sedation may be necessary for initial treatment. Any remaining hair should be clipped from affected areas and the lesions cleaned with a shampoo containing chlorhexidine or ethyl lactate and thoroughly rinsed with clean water. The lesion can then be treated with a drying solution of 2% aluminum acetate (Domeboro solution) for 3–5 minutes to decrease exudation. After cleaning and drying, an antibiotic–steroid cream or ointment can be applied. Application of the drying solution and antibiotic corticosteroid preparation can be continued at home by the owner 2–3 times a day. A novel, topical diester glucocorticoid spray (hydrocortisone aceponate (Virbacc Animal Health) is highly effective with minimal adverse effects when applied once daily. If the lesion is extensive or severe, systemic corticosteroids at anti-inflammatory doses can be used for 3–7 days, or as necessary, to reduce the redness of the skin and shorten the time necessary for resolution of the lesion. Most lesions resolve in 3–7 days but may recur if predisposing factors are not corrected. Some individuals especially of certain breeds, particularly Labrador Retrievers and St. Bernards, may be affected by deeper infection and may require systemic antibacterial therapy.

KEY POINTS

- Is a severe condition that needs to be treated aggressively.
- May re-occur if predisposing conditions are not corrected