



ABOUT THE DISEASE

A rapidly developing pruritic (itchy), painful, and damp skin lesion located under the hair coat is often referred to as a **hot spot** or **moist dermatitis**. These lesions are also sometimes referred to as **pyotraumatic dermatitis** as patients are often scratching and traumatizing the lesions as they get infected.

Hot spots begin with any type of superficial skin injury which causes some moisture/blood/serum to be caught under the hair coat. As bacteria grow on the fluid, they cause more damage to the skin, which leads to inflammation and leakage of more moisture/blood/serum. The affected area rapidly expands in as little as a few hours as this process continues without control.

While rapid and painful, these lesions are not life-threatening and tend to heal very well when treated appropriately.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Moist dermatitis is often diagnosed by visual inspection by a veterinarian. However, an underlying cause still needs to be determined.

Anything that causes skin injury or encourages a patient to scratch or chew its skin may start the disease process. Skin parasites such as fleas, ticks, or mange mites, as well as allergies, hair mats, or foreign material caught in the coat are common inciting factors. Treating **hot spots** involves controlling (and ideally, eliminating) these conditions.

TREATMENT

Single handedly the most important step in treatment is to have all the hair clipped and cleaned away from all affected lesions. Due to the intensity of the discomfort and pruritus, most patients require some level of reversible sedation to facilitate wound care.

The goal is to remove hair at least 1-2 inches beyond the last visible lesions. Most caregivers are surprised by this level of hair removal and are even more surprised at how large the lesions become in such a short period of time.

After the area is clipped and cleaned by a veterinary team, topical and systemic treatments are typically dispensed.

- Spray-on products (Duoxo®, Vetericyn®, etc) are preferred over topical treatments.
 - o These veterinary formulations help kill bacteria without the aid of topical antibiotics and create a barrier to prevent future growth of bacteria while protecting the skin/lesion(s).
- Antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and sometimes steroids.
 - o Help control superficial skin infection.
 - o Typically treated for 10-14 days.
 - o Additional treatment required if an underlying skin disease is identified.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Do not try to clip at home with scissors, and do not delay veterinary consultation as this progresses quickly.
- Regularly groom long or thick-coated dogs and cats to reduce dense undercoat and mat formation.
- Identify underlying causes.