

YEAST INFECTIONS OF THE SKIN AND EARS

Description

Malassezia pachydermatis is a common yeast infection of the skin and ear canals in dogs. It is a natural skin inhabitant that can be found on all dogs. Yeasts live on nutrients found in the skin itself and the oily secretions from the glands in the skin. As the infection causes irritation resulting in the secretion of even more oils, such infections are self-sustaining. Such infections usually involve erythema (reddening) and oily seborrhoea (greasiness). Pruritis (itchiness) is variable, sometimes severe. In the ear, infection results in a brown greasy exudate.

Certain individual dogs will be more susceptible to yeast problems, this being due to one or more of the following

- Individual body chemistry producing secretions favourable to yeast growth – primary yeast
- Allergy or hypersensitivity to the yeast – primary yeast
- Other skin disease causing increased secretions, with secondary yeast infection

In the event of the yeast being secondary to another skin condition, full treatment is possible once the underlying cause is treated.

If the yeast is the primary cause, the condition will be likely to flare throughout life, as the yeast can not be eliminated totally from skin. Attempts to change the body chemistry through dietary changes rarely manage to get adequate results.

Management

1. Deal with other conditions – bacterial infections, allergies, fleas etc.
2. In severe or infections resisting topical treatment, use Ketoconazole tablets. These may have to be sustained for 6 – 8 weeks.
Dose _____ tablets _____ for _____
3. Skin – Topical treatment using Miconazole based shampoo/rinse. It is important to realise that the active agent needs to be in contact with the skin for ten minutes. Work up the lather then leave on for 10 minutes before thorough rinsing. Allow your pet to run around outside for 10 minutes if that is easier. The frequency of use is dependant on the severity of the infection. Make sure to include around the ears – it actually helps to get some (diluted) in the ear canals.
Malaseb shampoo _____

4. Ears – two components – washing and antimicrobial
 - i. Ear wash solutions break down the sticky exudate and allow it to be shaken out or wiped out with cotton buds. It can be messy so doing it outside is a good idea. Always do it before the antimicrobial treatment. Apply enough to “gurgle” when the ear canal is massaged. Long term, weekly or fortnightly ear washing can help to prevent recurrence.

 - ii. Antimicrobial treatment. The aim is to treat the initial infection then hold off future infections with washing and shampooing.

Malassezia management is likely to be a lifetime task, but once you are aware of the problem it can usually be managed. Please contact us at the clinic with any queries.