Hot weather = Hotspots

"Hotspots" are a common summer-time problem for our dogs, especially those with a long hair-coat like my Golden Retriever, Murphy .

A hotspot (also referred to acute moist dermatitis) is essentially a focal area of infected and inflamed skin. This occurs when the bacteria which normally reside on the skin "normal skin flora" are given better than usual living conditions and start to grow rapidly.

I always tell clients bacteria love two things -being warm and being damp. Unfortunately, both are in ample supply during the summer months.

But why does this happen?

When your dog's hair becomes wet from - swimming, bathing, rain, licking etc. - the outside of the coat will dry quickly in the heat, however the hair close to the dog's body/skin (where the pesky bacteria reside) will remain damp. Now the bacteria have a damp and warm environment to start multiplying.

Hot spots generally start out as small as a bug bite but rapidly spread and worsen. They are often triggered by scratching, licking or chewing the affected area and within hours a nasty oozing sore can start to develop.

It is important to note not all hotspots are from swimming (remember the damp and warm talk earlier) - underlying conditions such as allergies, licking due to boredom (among others) can result in licking, and scratching, and create these favourable conditions for bacterial growth. Identifying and addressing the underlying cause for your dog's hot spot is vital to preventing further skin infections.

Murphy's spot

Murphy's fashionable shirt to prevent scratching

So how do we treat it?

Once a hot spot develops it is best to bring your animal into Vet HQ where the vets will do the following:

- Clip the affected area (sorry about the bad haircut)
- Wash the area with an antibacterial wash and allow it to dry thoroughly
- Apply a topical antibiotic and anti-inflammatory cream
- Place an E-Collar/Cone or shirt to prevent licking (sorry about the new fashion accessory)
- +/- In some cases oral antibiotics and anti-inflammatories are needed. This depends on the severity of the hotspot

How can we prevent it happening?

- Good parasite prevention, and management of allergies are essential to stop the scratching and prevent trauma to the skin
- Ensure your dog's coat is thoroughly dried after becoming wet. Give a thorough towel dry.
- If you see a hotspot developing carefully clip the area (clip until there is a clean margin of skin around) if you are not comfortable or do not have clippers at home allow us to do this for you. No kitchen scissors please - we don't want to accidently cut our sweet doggies!
- Clean the area with solution of 1 teaspoon of salt to 1/2 litre of water and dry afterwards
- If you are concerned about an area of skin please book in an appointment and we can help! The earlier we detect and treat a lesion the less severe they will be

Hotspots are an itchy and painful problem for you dog! Although it can be difficult to completely prevent hot spots from occurring,

I hope these tips can help significantly reduce the risk of recurrent skin infections in your furry friend.

Dr Ashley