



Atopic Dermatitis AKA Skin allergies.

Springtime means hay fever for us and many of our furry friends can feel the itch too. Atopic dermatitis is the most common skin condition that is noticed in dogs. Many dogs can suffer this condition, but it is more present in specific breeds such as Staffordshire terriers, West Highland White terriers, French and British bulldogs and Maltese terriers. Do not be fooled though, just because your dog isn't one of these breeds doesn't mean they still can't suffer from atopic dermatitis. Some common signs of this skin issue include excessive licking at certain areas specifically the feet, excess rolling, scratching and restlessness. This issue can develop very early in puppies, as early as three months. Unfortunately, clinical signs or behavioural signs of discomfort may not occur until much later, such as a year old. This can be confusing to owners who have never noticed allergies before, then at a year old suddenly their pup cannot stop itching. But as with any skin issue, understanding more about atopic dermatitis can help us on the way to controlling it.



The allergy itself arises from a defect in the skin's barrier. This defect allows some microscopic allergens to break through the skin and cause irritation that can continue indefinitely. This reaction can be triggered by a variety of products such as dust mites, grass types, certain plants and pollen amongst others. As you can see from the examples given these are both environmental and indoor factors and simply restricting a pet's time outside will not fix the issue at hand. Once a factor has triggered the skin it can cause a hypersensitive reaction and show a visible skin condition, usually on the armpits, ears, paws or other more humid area of the body. This reaction releases proteins.



Luckily there are some products available to help the barrier and protect your pets against allergies. One such product is Hills Derm Defence diet. This diet provides a holistic approach to managing allergies, containing clinically proven antioxidants that can help promote healthy skin and coat growth. By promoting healthy skin growth, you can reduce the chances of a compromised barrier in some dogs. When treating atopic dermatitis, it is important to remember there is no permanent cure, and that whatever medication prescribed will be an on-going treatment to help keep them comfortable. Therefore, it is also so important to make sure the medication you choose has minimal, if any, negative side effects over time. Using steroidal medication can have many side effects on your dog, especially on such a long course. Some of these side effects include altered hormone levels, cataracts developing, water retention and muscle wasting just to name a few. Products such as **Apoquel** help make avoiding steroidal medication much easier. This tablet can target the itch (a protein called cytokines) that is irritating your pooch without those negative side effects. If tableting isn't for you and your dog, the option of monthly **Cytopoint** injections is also available. This biological therapy works with your pet's own immune system, providing engineered antibodies to help the body's natural antibodies. These are specifically designed to target the main protein that sends the 'itch' sign to your pet's brain, giving the skin a chance to heal without being traumatised. If you have concerns about your pet's

itching or more information on either of these treatments, please give the clinic a call on 95817766 to book an appointment to discuss your pet's needs.

Vaccination Reminder!

Is your pet due for their annual vaccination? These annual vaccinations are important to help protect your pet against dangerous diseases that can be prevented. During your visit for your vaccination you also receive a health check for your pet to make sure everything is OK. If you leave your vaccination too long your pet might need a booster vaccination to make sure they are fully covered, so save yourself extra time and money by making sure your pet gets vaccinated on time!



Food Allergy Dermatitis

Though not as common, this allergy gets a lot of attention as it is commonly a misdiagnosis of atopic allergic dermatitis. Often people believe their dog has a food allergy when in fact it is an environmental skin issue instead. Food allergies can however occur, and are usually accompanied with some gastrointestinal issues. The allergy could be towards many different foods such as red meat or grains. When a pet has food allergies it can appear as a skin inflammation, which



can be why is it commonly misdiagnosed as atopic dermatitis. However, food allergies can also result in gastrointestinal issues such as diarrhoea which can indicate the issue is food related. To determine the cause of the dog's food allergy can be difficult, and it involves cutting out ingredients over time and monitoring response.

Another common misconception is that a pet is allergic to grains, and many food distributors have 'hopped' onto the fad diet of grain-free. Once again, it is possible for a dog to have a grain allergy, but it is much more likely that the dog has an allergy to a certain type of meat, such as red meat varieties. If

you force your dog onto a grain free diet when there is no real medical need you run the risk of increasing your dogs' chance of heart disease. Many studies and clinical trials have proven that on these grain free diets pets have decreased levels of taurine and lessened ability to produce the amino acid that is so vital to heart health. It has long been known that when there is a deficiency in taurine it can lead to a heart disease called dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM. As a substitute for grains often peas, lentils or potatoes are used as main ingredients, and they do not provide enough taurine for a healthy animal's diet. To combat this some diets, use taurine additives, though these are not digested and absorbed as well and can just mask the underlining heart disease issue that can be occurring. If you are concerned about your pet's heart contact the clinic immediately or alternatively, after hours contact WAVES on 9412 5700

A great diet to try to help improve your dogs' diet while determining if a food allergy is present is the Hills Z/d skin diet. This diet is extremely specific and helps control the factors that can be causing the issue. The great thing about this diet is that it can be used in conjunction with Apoquel. If deemed appropriate for your allergy case we can create a trial of Apoquel and Hills Z/d, pausing the Apoquel at 4 and 8 weeks for one week to monitor itchiness and other body responses. This provides a quick stop for the itching in your pup that will make them much happier and less irritated while the rest of the trial occurs. In summary it is important to remember that diet changes can have a sudden impact on your pet's health that you may not know about, therefore it is always best to discuss diet changes with your vet. Your vet can advise on any testing required and how to proceed forward without compromising other aspects of your pet's health.



Cats on the Prowl

As we can tell from their African relatives, cats are extremely efficient and agile hunters. As the African lion has an instinctive nature to chase down an antelope, our domesticated cats have the same instinct to hunt for wildlife. As the spring season enters and the wildlife around us come out of hiding, our cats hunting instincts come out too. Cats are responsible for the extinction of over 33 native Australian species and kill thousands of native birds, mammals and reptiles daily. As the breeding season begins for many of our Australian native animals, they are in more danger than ever of falling prey to our domestic cats' paws. To help prevent this it is always best to keep your cat indoors. Not only does this protect Australia's amazing and diverse wildlife but also helps protect your cat. During the chase of prey, many cats can get injured by cuts to the skin, encountering other cats or even more severe issues such as motor vehicle accidents. Having an indoor cat also reduces your cat's risk of contracting a dangerous cat-to-cat transmittable disease. Diseases such as Feline AIDS are passed through cat bites and though extensive research has been done no cure has been found. Keep your friend and our wildlife safe by keeping your cat indoors!



Injured wildlife

Cats are not the only thing that can be a danger to our native wildlife in these coming months. Cars, bushfires, poisons and various other human interventions can harm different species of animals. These animals need care when tragedy strikes but you need to make sure it is the right care. Wildlife should not be taken home to be nursed, it needs to be taken to a veterinary clinic for a vet to assess for injury. Native animals are fragile and need the appropriate levels of care that cannot be given at home. Also, excess human handling and intervention only harms the animals chance to being released back into the wild. There is also your own health to consider. After an accident many animals experience a high level of stress, only to be heightened by being handled by a human. This can cause the animal to lash out to save itself from what it perceives as danger. An example of this is a kangaroo still delivering a strong kick upon approach after a car accident or a bird biting a finger in an attempt to gain release from a grip. If you do find any injured wildlife and do not know how to proceed please call Wildcare Helpline on (08)9474 9055. They will be able to offer advice and if needed provide alternative contact numbers.

Did you know Wildlife facts!

Around 90% of native Australian species are only found native in Australia! This includes the kangaroo, koala, dingo and platypus, with many more to be named!

We have the only egg laying mammals in the world! Our amazing echidna and platypus are truly individual.

Not only are red kangaroos our largest mammal in Australia (with males weighting 200 pounds at 6 feet tall!) but we have over 65 other species of Macropods in our backyard!

A Tasmanian devil's head and neck make up 25% of its bodyweight!

The Dingo is considered Australia's largest apex predator, yet they will only attack Tasmanian devils if their pack numbers are high due to the Tasmanian Devils famed ferocity.

Koalas have an extremely strict diet of specific species of eucalyptus leaves. These leaves are toxic to most animals, but the Koala breaks down the toxins in a section of their digestive tract called the caecum.

This diet for a koala provides little nutrients, therefore they spend no more than 10 minutes a day in full-bodied exertion of any kind. They also do not live in 'packs' in the wild, only in captivity.



Lumps and Bumps

As an animal gets older, you may notice a lump or two that you could have sworn wasn't there a week, or even a day ago, and you may be right. Lumps can grow fast and it is important to get each lump checked as it arises, would you leave a lump unattended and unassessed if you found it on yourself? Some lumps can turn out to be what is referred to as a fat lump, or scientifically known as Lipomas. Lipomas form underneath the skin (usually the outer skin is not affected) and are considered subcutaneous. Commonly developed in dogs, and more commonly in overweight dogs, these lumps can feel soft with a small amount of mobility noted when palpated. They are considered a tumour as they are an abnormal growth of cells that form a mass/lump on or inside the body. Before panic ensues, it is necessary to remember tumours



Summer is coming!

As we are enjoying spring, the warm sun reminds us that summer is just around the corner. Even in Spring the sun can produce high heat levels that can affect the health of your pet. Make sure that your pets all have access to a cool, shady environment and fresh water always. Failure to provide these for your pet can seriously impact their health and wellbeing.



can be classified as benign or malignant. Fatty lumps come under the classification of benign, meaning they do not have any cancerous cells present. The main issue with lipomas is that with time the size can increase, and in certain areas such as the chest or armpits, the lumps can eventually impede movement. It is also common that once one lipoma has arisen another will eventually follow and so on. Liposarcomas are the scientific name for lumps that contain cancerous cells and can spread throughout the body, in other words malignant. Malignant tumours are cancerous and when these lumps are present, they generally need to be surgically removed.

Therefore, each lump that arises must be tested. One test to help discover the type of lump is called a fine needle aspirate (FNA). By taking a small sample of the lump and preparing it on a slide allows us to analyse some of the cells inside and determine whether the lump is a threat or not. These microscope slides can also be sent away for further and more in-depth analysis of the sample. While liposarcomas are much rarer than lipomas, each lump should be checked individually to rule out this possibility.

Another reason for a sudden lump arising on your pets' body is from a foreign object piercing the skin and entering the animal, referred to as a foreign body. The most common foreign body that is seen in vet clinics is the grass seed. The

way these seeds are shaped helps them to bury themselves into the ground to grow, but this has the same effect to our pets' skin. By burrowing through the various tissues, a grass seed once imbedded can cause serious damage to the area and even move around the body affecting numerous parts of your pet's system. When a grass seed is suspected, surgical intervention is required. By opening the swollen area, we can locate the foreign body inside, remove and then clean the wound to help natural healing. These lumps are most commonly found in between the toes, under the armpits or on the abdomen. Grass seeds can also lodge themselves inside the nasal cavity, or down the ear canal. Once again these will require surgery to remove the grass seed safely. If you are concerned about any lumps or bumps on you pet, give the clinic a call on 9581 7766 to chat to our nurses about booking a consultation.

Exercise and your Pet

Now we are getting into warmer weather it is important we aren't overexerting our pets in the warmer hours of the day. For your dogs, try to take them for walks in the morning or later afternoon when the pavement is a bit cooler for their paws. Remember they have to walk barefoot! And although your cat may like sunbaking, put some of their toys in a shadier area so they can be nice a cool through play time. Small tricks like these can help your pet avoid heat exhaustion and playtime can increase the bond you share with your pet.

