

HOT SPOTS
Part of the
Traumhof German Shepherd Dogs Article Series
By Karen Priest

When you went to sleep last night, your dog was curled up on his bed, peacefully sleeping. You didn't hear him scratching or chewing at himself. Nothing seemed amiss. Yet this morning, when you hugged him and gave him a good morning greeting, you noticed a wet spot on his fur. The fur was disturbed, and you parted it to take a closer look. You were shocked by what you found. A circular area was red and inflamed, heat emanating from it. The area was moist, and ulcerated. You cleaned it, considered a trip to the vet, and went to make breakfast. A couple hours later, you decided to recheck the wound, trying to determine if a vet visit was in order. To your surprise, the area had enlarged almost double in size! You called the vet.

What is it & How did it Develop?

A hot spot is also called acute moist dermatitis. It is often a rapidly enlarging, rapidly worsening lesion, sometimes oozing pus, sometimes raised, and often raw and hot. Hot Spots are common in dogs who swim frequently, and are also called "Summer Sores". Hot Spots can occur around shedding time, or in conjunction with allergies, and begin in diverse ways; from a tick bite (but not all tick bites), from a scratch or scrape. Anywhere that bacteria can settle in, a hot spot can take hold.

Symptoms:

Often the spots appear suddenly and enlarge rapidly. You can usually first notice a wet spot in your dog's fur, even where a small spot is erupting. Sometimes a full blown hot spot is preceded by a scabby /crusty area, perhaps at the site of a bug bite. The spot may just be raw and red, or it may be oozing white/yellow pus. Most often it will be moist, with sticky fur surrounding it, and if you place a hand hovering over the area, you can feel heat coming off.

Treatment

The first thing you can do is clean and dry the area. It is best to clip the area free of hair. Part of treatment will be keeping the area dry, and this will be easier with no hair/fur in the way.

Once you have clipped, use either chlorhexidine or Betadine and warm water to cleanse the spot, gently. I usually use Hydrogen Peroxide, following Betadine/water, as it tends to be drying. Then, pat the area dry with a soft cloth. It is really important to keep the area dry, so do this very well.

If the sore is small and not very bad yet, you might be able to treat it topically like this and get it to heal. You will need to dry it every 2 hours or so. I often apply Neosporin, but you really need the area DRY, so too much ointment won't help the situation.

I almost always put the dog on a wide spectrum oral antibiotic, such as cephalexin at about 10mg per Lb. I continue antibiotics for 10-14 days.

If your dog won't leave the area alone, you might need an E collar or one of the new E collar alternatives. It is important he isn't chewing or scratching at it. To help relieve inflammation and itch, your vet might give a one does injection of an anti-inflammatory. Hot spot Spray, available over the counter at pet stores, might also offer relief, and will be a better option than a gooey ointment.

Note: While some dogs seem prone to frequent hot spot, others develop a spot once or twice and never again. Heavy coated dogs, such as Goldens, seem more prone to the problem. This may be due to moisture getting trapped under the fur and providing a great environment for a spot to develop.