

Skin conditions in dogs

Skin conditions in dogs are one of the main causes of visits to our clinic. Skin problems are more prevalent in the warmer seasons, when seasonal allergies and other allergic symptoms are more likely. At times, skin conditions can signal underlying health issues. Skin conditions can vary from mild to severe and often require veterinary treatment to resolve or prevent them from getting worse. Untreated skin conditions often lead to secondary and tertiary issues.

Common signs that indicate your dog might have a skin condition include:

- Frequent scratching
- Biting their skin
- Skin Sores and scabs
- Dry Skin
- Flaky skin
- Rashes
- Redness
- Dandruff
- Lumps and bumps
- Hair Loss
- Unusual or unpleasant smell

Common causes of skin problems:

- Environmental Allergies (e.g. grass or tree pollen, moulds)
- Parasite allergies (e.g. fleas, mites)
- Bacterial skin infections (e.g. folliculitis)
- Sarcoptic mange or demodex (i.e. skin mites)
- Fungal infection (e.g. ringworm, yeast)
- Endocrine (hormonal) imbalances
- Food Allergies (e.g. beef, eggs, chicken and dairy)

Problems with diagnosing and treating skin conditions:

- Skin conditions are difficult to diagnose based on the observed signs alone. This is because signs are not normally specific to one condition, but are similar for a range of conditions.
- This means that we may need to undertake a range of tests to diagnose the condition. It is highly unlikely that one appointment or one test or one treatment will resolve the issue, and finding the cause may be a long process.
- Even when we get a firm diagnosis, there may not always be a cure. And the best we may be able to achieve is to prevent your pet from getting worse.
- This uncertainty, the amount of testing required and the potential length of investigation can be frustrating for the owner and expensive.

How can you help?

- Be patient!
- Always complete the course of treatment prescribed and follow all instructions.
- Attend rechecks.
- Be aware that the same treatment may not always have the same effect. Although the symptoms may be the same, there could be other contributing factors that influence a skin's response to treatment.