

# About that sore spot



**P**ets with sores and skin irritation are not so happy. Here's what to do when spot a sore.

Sores on the skin can range from small pimple-like bumps to large raw wounds. Most minor sores clear up within a few days, but larger or deeper sores can be painful and may need medical attention.

## Causes

Your pet creates most sores by licking or scratching her skin to relieve such itchy problems as fleas, mites or allergies. Skin infection also causes sores.

Dogs, especially large active breeds, may relentlessly lick their skin out of boredom and create sores called lick granulomas. These pets usually target spots on their front legs, and the constant attention from the pet's wet tongue can eventually cause sores that resemble inflamed calluses.

Pesky skin problems, such as flea allergies, also cause pets to nibble at their tender hides. Raw infected sores called hot spots can occur in a matter of hours if your pet bites or chews her skin to ease the itch.

Serious conditions that cause skin sores include immune-system disorders and cancer.

## What you can do at home

If your pet is scratching and causing sores, check her

for fleas. Apply or ask your veterinarian for a monthly topical or oral flea preventive. One note: In many cases treating the house and yard is necessary to prevent reinfestation.

Anti-itch baths and cream rinses may soothe allergic pets, and medicated shampoos and anti-itch sprays or ointments can relieve minor sores.

## When to call the veterinarian

Schedule an appointment with your veterinarian if your pet exhibits raw wounds, hair loss, or excessive scratching. Additional symptoms such as decreased appetite or lethargy are signs your pet needs immediate veterinary care.

## What your veterinarian will do

Your veterinarian will examine the skin and may perform skin scrapings, a skin biopsy, or a fungal culture to determine what's causing the sores. If the doctor suspects allergies, he or she may recommend skin or blood tests to identify the allergens affecting your pet.

Treatment will depend on the cause, but often includes medicated shampoos and antibiotics to clear up the sores. Once you treat the culprit, your pet's pelt will feel as good as new.