

Skin infections just doesn't go away? – Florence Chong

So, your pet has a bacterial or yeast (fungal) infection that is being treated but the skin problem never seems to go away. Persistent skin infections are frustrating, and skin diseases can be difficult to diagnose, resolve slowly and the cause of poor quality of life for your pet. Not to mention the stress and cost to you on medical treatments and drugs.

One of the reasons that I am sharing this information is to help pet owners understand the challenges they are facing when managing dogs with skin issues.

Here are some facts:

It is a fact that bacteria and yeast (fungus) are always in competition. So, when one is treated, often the other will take off.

Bacteria and yeast (fungus) are often secondary (refers to an infection that occurs as a complication) to another issue that provide bacterial/fungus to over-grow.

Some skin infections, especially those caused by bacteria and yeast (fungus) might persist include:

Antibiotic resistance – Some bacterial become resistant to common antibiotics. Overuse or misuse of antibiotics (like not finishing a prescribed course) can reduce the effectiveness of the antibiotics.

Health conditions - Weaken immune system (underlying health problems) makes it harder for the body to fight infections. To name a few common ones: Hormonal imbalances like hypothyroidism or Cushing's disease, autoimmune diseases, parasitic infestations (fleas, ticks and mites) and allergies. If not properly managed, these primary health conditions in dogs can lead to secondary infections.

Incomplete treatment – Pet owners' compliance, not finishing or adhering to prescribed treatment.

Compromised sebum layer – In our first column in the Rockaway Times, we reviewed the new multimodal approach in managing and treating dog skin issues. We discussed how topical treatments including anti-bacterial and anti-fungal shampoos and hydrating conditioners can be a direct and effective approach to treating skin issues. The sebum layer is composed of lipids (fats and oils) that create a protective and moisturizing barrier on the skin's surface (epidermis). It is an anti-bacterial, anti-fungal barrier that protects and prevents the skin from drying and flaking.

Replacing the sebum layer is key to restoring skin health and prevent dry skin and infection. It is important to use a hydrating conditioner to replace the sebum layer to prevent dry skin.

The lack of good hydration (hydrating conditioner) leaves the sebum layer compromised. When you (or the pet groomer) only shampoo without good conditioning, the pet's skin can become dry and leave the skin vulnerable to impairment. Impaired skin barrier does not protect the pet from external environmental elements. Often dry itchy skin is mistaken for skin allergies and it can also lead to other skin issues.

The pet's skin and hair are indicator of bodily health and a beautiful coat starts with healthy skin. The cost of preventing skin issues is cheaper than treating an impaired one and improves the pet's quality of life.

Our next column will discuss how hair, skin and the sebum layer protect our pets?