



Self-inflicted trauma results in erythema, (reddened skin) papules, pustules, crusts, and hair loss in areas where fleas feed.

Flea-Allergy Dermatitis

Diagnostic Plan

History
Physical examination
Detection of fleas, flea dirt and tapeworm segments
Intradermal skin testing

Therapeutic Plan

Flea control
Corticosteroids

Nutritional Plan

Nutrition adequate for tissue repair.

Sequence of flea-allergy dermatitis



Flea punctures skin to feed

Flea saliva sets up an antigen-antibody reaction

Excoriation and inflammation result from self-inflicted trauma.

Acute bacterial infection results.

Flea-Allergy Dermatitis

Your pet has flea-allergy dermatitis. Flea-allergy dermatitis is a skin disease caused by a pet's unusual sensitivity to flea bites. Fleas – and thus flea-allergy dermatitis – can be controlled with insecticides. Other therapeutic measures include anti-inflammatory medications, antibiotics and special shampoos. This client education sheet will help you learn more about flea-allergy dermatitis and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

What You Should Know About Flea-Allergy Dermatitis

Intense scratching and biting are the most common signs of flea-allergy dermatitis. Reddened skin, bumps on the skin, self-inflicted abrasions and hair loss are common. In dogs, these lesions are most common on the lower back, inner thighs, abdomen, flanks and neck. The skin may feel greasy and have an unusual odor. Skin infections due to bacteria result from excessive scratching and biting. The skin may become thick and dark in long-standing cases. In cats, reddish-brown crusts are often present on the head, neck and lower back.

Causes

Flea-allergy dermatitis results when a pet is unusually sensitive to flea bites.

Diagnosis

Your veterinarian may suspect flea-allergy dermatitis based on physical examination findings. Finding fleas, flea eggs or flea debris (flea feces that looks like black pepper) on an animal is proof of flea infestation. Tapeworm segments on the

animal or in its stool are additional proof. The typical signs and skin lesions described above suggest that an animal is allergic to flea bites. This diagnosis can be confirmed by skin testing.

Treatment and Home Care

Flea control is the safest and most effective means of controlling flea-allergy dermatitis. For tips about flea control, ask your veterinarian for a copy of the Hill's® Client Information Series handout titled "Fleas."

Your veterinarian may prescribe one or more of the following treatments depending on your pet's clinical signs. Anti-inflammatory agents help relieve the intense itching that occurs in pets with flea-allergy dermatitis. Antibiotics are useful in controlling bacterial skin infections as are antiseborrheic and antibacterial shampoos. Dewormers effectively control tapeworm infections that can occur as a result of flea infestation.

Nutritional Plan

If your pet has severe skin disease due to flea-allergy dermatitis, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Some patients with traumatized skin may benefit from foods with increased levels of protein and energy during the recovery process. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® i/d® Canine and i/d® Feline Gastrointestinal Health.

When your pet's recovery is complete, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, and on the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. Optimal nutrition provides for a pet's needs based on age and activity level, but more importantly, reduces the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein and calories. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include the Hill's® Science Diet® brand of pet foods.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

Presented as an educational service by



Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.