

FACT SHEET

Malessezia Dermatitis/Yeast Infection

Yeasts are single celled fungi, a few species of which are commonly used to leaven bread and ferment alcoholic beverages, other species as discussed here cause infection in animals. Yeasts are commonly found within our environment, and we all carry a controlled level on our skin and hair; if however, environmental changes occur, then yeast reproduction may be accelerated resulting in overgrowth and therefore disease and discomfort to the host.

Malessezia Dermatitis is a yeast infection of the skin that can affect humans, dogs and occasionally cats, making the skin very itchy, crusty and smelly; although not life-threatening, the condition can make life unbearable for those affected. The environment on the skin can change for a number of reasons including, though not limited to:

- High humidity – seasonal changes
- An increase in skin oil secretion – perhaps due to an allergy or diet change
- Compromised Immune System – stressful period, vaccinations, trauma, existing disease
- Medication – antibiotics, steroids

Yeast infections of the skin are not contagious as each is highly dependant on the specific environment of the individual and their immune response, though some breeds do seem to be predisposed to these infections; American Cocker Spaniel, Bassett Hound, Dachshund, English Setter, Poodle, Shetland Sheepdog, Shih Tzu and terrier breeds like the Australian, Jack Russell and West Highland White. The West Highland White has also been indicated as one of the breeds that can become allergic to the yeasts themselves.

Diagnosis

A positive identification of the yeast organisms can be made by your veterinarian, who will take a sample from the skin and view it under the microscope. However, the organism is commonly found on healthy skin and confirmation of diagnosis may be dependant on response to any treatment.

It should also be noted that a yeast infection may be secondary to other conditions, i.e. it has developed into an infection only due to another disease being prolific, and although the yeast infection requires tending to, it may not clear up, or may reoccur at any time should the causative disease remain untreated.

Treatment

The treatment of yeast infection will include anti-fungal medications and maybe oral and topical treatments but you must also think about healing them from an emotional level as well as physical to enhance the immune system, the animal will then heal itself and be less prone to re-infection.

Through medication, itchiness will normally subside quickly, with sores taking a few weeks to clear, assuming the correct treatment is being administered. If no improvement is observed within 7 days of medical administration, a review of treatment by your veterinarian should be sought.

The dog's immune status will require stimulating to promote the body's natural responses to infection of this kind. A short course (5-7 days) of the herb Echinacea will effectively support the immune system, stimulating and strengthening actions within the body. Please seek alternative advice if the host already has abnormally functioning immune system, e.g. Diabetes, Leukosis, FIV.

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To further enhance the natural defences, temporarily remove all toxins from the regime, avoid administration of worming medications and flea treatments where possible and feed a clean chemical free diet that is low in yeast promoting ingredients.

There are a number of anti-fungal herbs that would be useful as a wash for your pet, Tea Tree being one of the better known and easily obtained. Even if applied topically, herbs can have very strong properties and advice from an Herbalist is recommended before trying to manufacture your own preparations, especially on young, old or pregnant/lactating animals.

To relieve the amount of stress that your pet is experiencing, Bach Flower essences re-establish balance and harmony to the emotional state thereby promoting physical health and well-being; Crab Apple is a cleansing remedy that can be sprayed as a mist to help control odour or administered orally to flush out toxins.

Probiotic bacteria and digestive enzymes will accelerate intestinal healing and boost the immune system; this in turn will promote a healthy digestive tract that will naturally inhibit the over-growth of yeast on the skin.

The animal may be predisposed to re-infection throughout its life having succumbed once, you must therefore familiarise yourself with the early signs of infection so that you may act quickly should it represent itself, and also consider maintenance treatment to prevent a reoccurrence. This could include regular bathing and diet control, in conjunction with regular health checks, specifically the ears; the ears are a perfect breeding ground for yeast, they are warm, moist and protected from the environment and will be one of the first areas to show signs of over-growth. Pull back the ear cuff and observe for any foreign substances, odour, or excessive hair – the healthy ear will be clean and odourless.

How can Naturediet help?

Certain foods can provide nourishment to the yeast and should therefore be removed from the diet where possible, these include:

- Simple sugars
- Yeast
- Dairy products
- Wheat

Naturediet Pet Foods will not predispose your pet to yeast infection as the range does not contain yeast, wheat or dairy products, and provides more complex sugars to the diet. The range is chemical free and easy to digest, relieving the pressure put on the immune system at times of digestive stress or intolerance.

It is worth trying to feed only white meats for a period of time, for instance chicken, tripe or fish. Red meat requires more digestive effort and can make certain individuals' blood hot, aggravating the yeast infection. Naturediet Sensitive is also a suitable diet.

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