

Complexity of Skin Disease, Diagnosis and Treatment.

As vets and vet nurses, we wish we had one simple solution for your pet's skin problems, but multiple diagnostic tests and elimination trials may be needed to reach the diagnosis.

'What causes skin disease in dog & cats?'

There are a number of causes for skin disease in pets including:

- Parasites such as fleas or mites
- Allergies to environmental factors such as pollen, plants, mould, insects and grass
- Allergies due to food, preservatives or ingredients in human or animal products
- Bacteria or yeast overgrowth, either as a primary problem, or secondary to an allergy
- Underlying medical or genetic conditions that can contribute to poor skin health.

With a list of factors that complex, you can start to see why it often takes more than one test or elimination trial before we find the cause.

'Many diseases look the same, and one disease can look many different ways – it's tricky!'

The skin can only react to a problem in limited ways, such as redness, itching, hair loss, pustules or nodules. Therefore many different diseases may cause the same change to the skin: food allergies, scabies mites and bacterial infections all cause itch, but require very different treatments!

Additionally, one disease can have several different symptoms, such as demodex mites causing hair loss, redness and pustules.

Once a diagnosis is reached, your vet may recommend one or more treatments, and for dogs with certain skin conditions, treatment may need to continue for life.

Even after diagnosis, regular check-ups may be needed. When your dog's skin condition "flares up" we recommend speaking with your vet, who may do some more testing to see whether the condition has changed, or whether secondary infection is present that needs specific treatment. This will ensure your pet's skin heals effectively and results in shorter treatment periods. This not only saves money in the long run but most importantly, makes your pet feel better, sooner!

'How can I prevent skin disease in my dog or cat'

Unfortunately this is not always preventable (allergies & atopy in particular), but there are steps we can take at home to minimise certain factors.

First & foremost is REGULAR FLEA CONTROL!

For animals with allergies, bathing with **Aloveen**, **Nutriderm** or other specialised kind-to-skin shampoo will help to remove allergens from the coat and soothe,

dry, irritated skin. For animals prone to skin infections, bathing with **special shampoos** once a week to once a fortnight, can reduce bacteria and yeast numbers and prevent overgrowth.

For more information on skin disease please speak with one of our vets or nurses or make an appointment today.