



COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER— APRIL 2024

ITCHY SKIN DISEASE

Did you know that, like us, pets can have allergies to things in their environment and also to food? Allergic skin disease occurs when a certain particle (called an allergen) triggers an overactive reaction within the immune system. Reactions can occur in a variety of ways, both mild and acute, some of which can cause areas of the skin and ears to become itchy and inflamed. Allergens may trigger this reaction by being ingested, inhaled, or from contact with the skin. The most commonly affected areas for itchy and inflamed skin are the face, ears, feet, armpits, groin and stomach area. Once the allergic reaction is triggered, bacteria and yeast (which normally live on the skin) have a chance to overgrow and cause an infection, which then worsens the skin irritation. The lining of the ear canal is very similar to skin, which is why the ears can be affected by allergic skin disease in the same way as the skin can be, either at the same time or on their own.

Common symptoms include:

- Chewing and licking skin, especially feet
- Itchiness, redness, skin ulceration and hair loss
- Ear infections
- Poor coat quality
- Poor skin
- Recurrent upset tummy

Behavioural manifestations:

- Irritability
- Depression
- Lethargy
- Interruptive behaviours
- Restlessness
- Aggression

A multidimensional approach is often required to help treatment:

- Patience! - Skin disease can be very complex and requires time to improve
- Therapeutics — Anti-parasitics, Antibiotics/Antifungals, Steroids, Antihistamines, Oclacitinib, Immunotherapy
- Wound management
- Topical treatment
- Environmental management

If you have a pet experiencing any of these problems, we will always aim to help make them more comfortable. The starting point being a clinical examination with one of our veterinary surgeons who will discuss the next steps with you. This may include doing some further investigations or trialling a course of treatment. Please don't hesitate to contact the surgery to discuss this further.

"Itching is a PAIN"

Causes include:

- P** – parasites
- A** – allergies
- I** – infection
- N** – neurogenic/neoplastic



MEET MARCUS



Hello, I am one of the new faces at Dalehead. I joined the practice at the beginning of March, and wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Marcus, I graduated from The Royal Veterinary College in 2014. Initially I went into equine practice and spent 2 years working in a busy hospital in Newmarket.

After this I worked for a few years in the beautiful Cotswolds where I treated everything from beloved ponies to keen amateur riders and race horses. I loved my time there, but with a new family I wanted to try something without on call! I then joined a pharmaceutical company where I have spent the last 4 years. I worked with a great team ensuring vets and owners had all the information they needed about the products we sold. However, I really missed working with animals and their owners. Having moved from the Cotswolds to the glorious Dales when the opportunity to join the Companion Animal Team here arrived, it was too good to pass up!

HAVE YOU NOTICED CHANGES IN YOUR CAT'S BEHAVIOUR?

Cats can often mask any pain that they maybe experiencing. They may only display subtle signs or changes in their behaviour to indicate that they are in pain. As cat owners, it is important that we are aware of the signs to look out for so that we are more likely to recognise when our feline friends are uncomfortable or showing signs of discomfort.

- * **Low mood and irritability** - You may notice your cat does not like being touched, has decreased tolerance or may even become uncharacteristically aggressive. For example, have you noticed your cat has stopped coming for their daily cuddles, or maybe they are less curious about changes to their surroundings?
- * **Decrease in activity** – Are they less interested in interacting with family or in playing by themselves? Try to engage them to assess your cat's response. Cats in pain often sleep more and you may find them snoozing in unusual places.
- * **Vocalisation** - Any vocalisation which is out of character for your cat is worth noting. Meowing, growling or hissing when moving or eating. Maybe they are generally more vocal, or making more noise at night.
- * **Changes in behavioural patterns** – For example not jumping up onto a favourite chair could be a sign of osteoarthritis. Not passing urine or faeces as often could be a sign of pain if getting in and out of the litter tray is difficult. Cats who normally toilet outside may find it difficult to walk as far if they have pain in their hips and joints, and may mess in the house.
- * **Changes in body posture** – Have you noticed any tension in your cats posture? They may appear more crouched or hunched. Cats express pain by lowering their heads and by flattening their ears to their head. Many owners report that their cat who would normally run up and down the stairs are now only taking one step at a time, or now hopping up and down.
- * **Decreasing in grooming and cleaning** – Getting into a comfortable position to properly groom themselves can be difficult for a cat in pain. If the source of pain is dental then this can stop them from cleaning their nails and fur.
- * **Reduced appetite** – Any change in the frequency to your cat's eating habits may indicate pain from dental or oral issues but it can also be an indication of low mood caused by pain elsewhere in the body. Reduced appetite can also be a sign that your cat's energy needs have changed; if they are less active, they need less energy, so maybe less hungry. Your cat may also display a preference for soft food rather than dry kibble as this is easier for them to eat.

If you feel your cat's behaviour has changed and any of the above points resonate with you, please phone the surgery to make an appointment with one of our vets. Being able to recognise these early signs means that we can provide treatment as soon as possible for your cat, making them more comfortable and happy before their pain worsens.

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

The Countryside Code advises that all dogs should be kept on a lead when walking in rural areas, regardless of their nature. This is because even the most gentle of dogs can create problems for wildlife and livestock without realising they are having a negative impact. At this time of year, ground birds are nesting and the fields are filling with newborn lambs so it is more important than ever to follow these guidelines.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR DOG ON A LEAD WHILST WALKING THROUGH FIELDS CONTAINING SHEEP AND LAMBS:

Most sheep are herded by trained working sheep dogs so their natural instinct as a flight animal is to run away when they see a dog. At this time of year ewes are either heavily pregnant or have just lambed. Heavily pregnant sheep stressed by being startled, scared, and moved too fast or too far can abort their lambs. Ewes with young lambs which are disturbed and become separated do not always reunite quickly. The lambs can become 'mis-mothered' trying to follow and feed from the incorrect ewe or losing contact with their mother. This in turn can result in the lambs not feeding enough, getting too cold, and unfortunately dying.

A dog's natural instinct as a predator is to run after another moving animal. In most pet dogs this instinct is harnessed in play; chasing balls and toys or other dogs as playmates. The excitement demonstrated in play mode becomes heightened when the animal being chased continues to run and the dog can quickly become intently focussed on this rather than heeding the calls of their owner. Many owners have been left calling into the wind as their dog heads after a rabbit they unexpectedly disturbed in the undergrowth! Whilst the 'recall' command is the most important your dog will ever learn—it could save their life—it should not be relied upon 100% around livestock and therefore putting a lead on your dog is the only safe option.

Unfortunately in recent years there has been an increase in the incidence of sheep worrying, including in our locality. As a mixed veterinary practice we see the devastating effects that sheep worrying has on livestock with almost all incidents resulting in the euthanasia of the sheep involved. What is even more alarming is the number of times that these attacks are performed by family pets whose owners are deeply shocked by the results.

Don't take a chance, keep your dog on a lead around livestock.



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers,

