

Help your pet have a better dermatology examination

Your poor pup has itchy, irritated skin and you're feeling helpless. Not to worry! You can help your veterinarian arrive at a diagnosis by remembering these simple tips.

Many of us may have suffered a skin issue at some point in our lives—bug bites, poison ivy, rashes or other types of irritation—and we all know it's no picnic. In fact, sometimes irritated skin symptoms can be so severe that it can feel like you're going crazy. And so it should be no surprise to us that itchy, irritated skin in our pets can drive them to endless scratching, biting and licking to try to find relief.

Skin issues in your pet can be extremely difficult for your veterinary team to diagnose—not to mention, extremely frustrating for you and painful for your pet. However, there are ways you can be prepared for your pet's dermatologic examination to help speed along the diagnostic process.



History is everything

If you suspect a problem with your pet's skin or are already scheduled for a dermatology exam, it's very helpful for you to come prepared with a good history. But what does that mean?

A history of symptoms: Where on your pet does the most scratching/licking/biting occur? Have you noticed hair loss, increased redness, scaliness, spots or bumps, crusty or scabby patches, or open sores? Are your pet's eyes irritated? Have you seen fleas on your pet? Have you noticed other bodily changes, like weight loss/gain, personality, appetite, or urinary changes?

A travel history: Has your pet been out of the state in the past two years? Has his environment changed in the past six months? If so, there may be infectious diseases for the veterinarian to consider that are not present where you live.

A diet history: Have you changed your pet's regular food in the last 12 months? Bring a list of the brand names and types of food your pet has been eating. What types of snacks or treats does he eat on a regular basis? Bring a list of those, too.

A drug history: Think about the types of parasite prevention you use on your pet. What type of flea prevention do you use, and has it changed or stayed consistent over the last year? Make sure to have the specific name of the product—some are more effective at dialling up skin conditions than others. Has your pet been given any antibiotics, steroid or cortisone pills or shots, or allergy medicine?

A seasonal history: Does your pet's itchy, irritated skin occur only in the spring, or are you seeing these symptoms at other times of the year?