

Skin Fold Pyoderma (Intertrigo)

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BASIC INFORMATION

Description and Causes

Intertrigo arises from an overgrowth or colonization of skin folds by normal skin bacteria and sometimes by yeast. Skin folds are considered normal in many animals. For example, facial and nasal folds occur in short-nosed, flat-faced breeds. Lip folds are common in spaniels and many water dogs. Tail and vulvar folds are common in some breeds and can also arise with obesity. Moisture, secretions (tears, saliva), and skin cells accumulate in these folds, which also have poor air circulation. Bacteria and yeast love to grow in this type of environment, which leads to inflammation and the typical clinical signs.

Clinical Signs

Hair loss, redness, accumulation of debris, and discoloration of adjacent skin are common findings. A foul odor may be detected in the area, and pimples sometimes develop in the skin of the folds.

Diagnostic Tests

A possible diagnosis may be made in the examination room, based on the presence of an infection located in skin folds. Swabs may be used to collect material from the area and examine it under the microscope. Finding bacteria and yeast helps to confirm the diagnosis.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

If possible, it is best to remove the fold surgically, especially if the infection does not respond well to treatment or recurs. Surgery

of lip, facial, or vulvar folds is often very successful. Removal of facial or nasal folds dramatically affects the appearance of the dog, so discuss this option carefully with your veterinarian.

In overweight animals, weight reduction helps minimize folds in the armpit and belly regions, and sometimes around the vulva. Weight-reduction programs also benefit other organs of the body.

As far as medical treatment of the infected folds, folds that are not near the eyes may be cleaned every 1-3 days with an antiseptic shampoo or cleanser that contains chlorhexidine, benzoyl peroxide, or ethyl lactate. These agents are irritating to the eyes and should not be used near them. Special medicated pads or lid wipes may be used to clean facial and nasal folds. A topical antibiotic or antiseptic ointment, cream, or spray may also be applied (not near the eyes) once or twice daily to the folds. Rarely, oral antibiotics may be needed.

Follow-up Care

Rechecks are periodically needed as long as the pet has folds, because infections in these areas are common. Careful cleaning of the folds daily or several times a week with a gentle damp cloth, baby wipes, or medicated pads for dogs (Malaseb, Malacetic, Chlorhexidine 3% PS) helps keep the folds free of debris. If a foul odor, itchiness, redness, or persistent buildup of debris is noticed, consult with your veterinarian. Rechecks are also needed to monitor animals on weight-reduction programs.

Prognosis

Prognosis for improvement is excellent with adequate treatment, but the animal may need lifelong topical maintenance therapy if the folds are not removed surgically.