



# Mt. Brydges Tails

Spring 2013

Volume 6

**Don't Miss Our Food Sale Days**  
**10% off food in clinic and FREE SHIPPING from our Vetstore**  
all weekend  
May 17th, July 19th, Sept 20th and Nov 20th\*  
\*Limit 3 per client



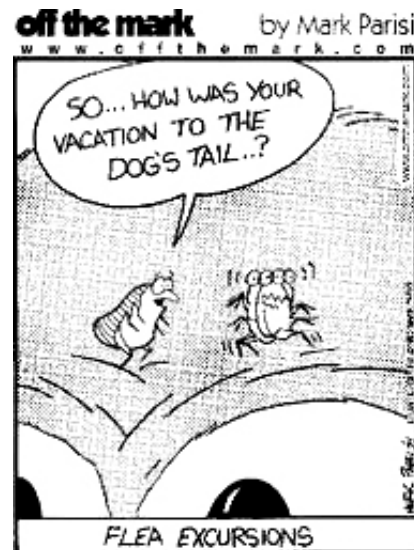
Like us on Facebook®!

Get *what you need when you need it*. Just call or e-mail us *in advance* so we can have your food or medication ready for pick-up!

**COUPON**  
**\$10**  
**Voucher for VetStore!**  
Send us an e-mail to [mtbrydgesvets@gmail.com](mailto:mtbrydgesvets@gmail.com) and we'll credit your account!

## Welcome to Our Annual Newsletter!

We are more accessible to you than ever before! With the efficiency of current technology we are able to offer some of our services in a virtual form for your convenience. We have teamed with a company called *VetStreet* which provides you a secure portal to your animal's basic medical information. *By simply providing us with your e-mail, a link will be sent back to you.* Make your own password and away you go! This portal will send you reminders via e-mail, allow you to request appointments, upload pictures to create a profile, update your personal information, review recent visits and reminders, and has folders with health information on many common conditions. *Check it out!* This company now hosts our website, so it too has a new look! *VetStreet* will also send you conventional mail reminders, but the company is based out of Chicago so expect US postage! Another service is our secure on-line *VetStore*. This has a huge inventory selection from toys, supplements, grooming products and accessories to our full-line of premium pet nutrition and select prescription medications. Again you can join via e-mail and all products ship anywhere in Ontario! Reasonable shipping rates (\$7.95/large box), and don't miss our "FREE SHIPPING" weekends on the side column. Catch further sales throughout the year by liking us on *Facebook®* or *Google Plus®*. You can also trust what you are accustomed to as we still offer all our other services through the clinic.



## Itching for an answer

A shiny, full hair coat often properly represents an overall healthy animal. The skin is the largest and most visible organ of the body, not to mention tangible: After all, they are called pets! Has your companion had issues with its hair or skin? It is a common area of concern for many animals at one point or another. There are many skin issues, and because the skin has limited methods of defense, these problems often look similar. Therefore, identifying the cause of a skin problem is important for its restoration. Problems with the skin are easy to identify; things like:

- Itchiness
- Dullness, dryness, thinning or absolute loss of hair
- Redness or rash of the skin
- Thickening or discoloration of the skin
- Scabbing, scaling, flaking of the skin that may be painful
- Unpleasant odor or discharge
- Head shaking/rubbing

- Dragging/licking the bum, aka "Butt Surfing"!

There are numerous causes of skin disease, but thankfully most of them are curable or, at least, manageable. The main categories of skin disease are as follows:

- Parasitic – eg. Fleas, Mites, Lice, Ticks
- Infectious – eg. Bacteria, Fungus/Yeast or Viral
- Allergic – eg. Inhaled Allergens (pollen, dust), Contact Allergens (pollens, chemicals) or Ingested (food sensitivity)

Spring is in the air and so are the mosquitoes! **Just a reminder it is heartworm and parasite season again.** Although we truly encounter parasites year-round, the peak is during the warm seasons. **Year-round monthly prevention** continues to be recommended. Visit [www.petsandparasites.org](http://www.petsandparasites.org) for current parasite control recommendations.

- **Hormonal/Endocrine** – eg. Hypothyroidism, Hyperadrenocorticism, Diabetes
- **Immune Mediated** – eg. Pemphigus, Discoid Lupus
- **Neoplastic** – eg. Melanoma, Mast Cell Tumor, Squamous Cell Carcinoma

The first three are the most common and will be the area of focus in this brief article.

## Get to the bottom of it!

If your companion is having problems with its skin/coat, it is worth having them examined. Although the different categories of skin disease can overlap with one another, there is usually a primary issue that has caused a combination of problems. For example, a flea infestation can cause an allergic reaction that disrupts the skin barrier enough to allow normal surface bacteria to invade into the skin and cause infection. Clearly, just treating the bacterial infection would not solve the problem, but treating the fleas might! We like to get a thorough *history* and *physical exam* on the patient as it is the most **VALUABLE** step. Other specific diagnostic tests like swabs, scrapings, biopsies or cultures may stem from there.

**Parasites** are the most common skin problem with companion animals. Good old **fleas** are #1 and seem like a simple problem, but those who have had an infested home can attest to their persistence! Fleas hitchhike onto an animal blood feed and then lay eggs that infest the home. Over a short time they hatch and mature into a large population of biting bloodsuckers. They prefer to be on cats and dogs, so many people are unaware of their presence until their companions start to show their dislike to them. Some animals tolerate the bites quite well with just occasional itching and light dander, whereas many are very itchy to the point of pulling their hair out. Logically, the more sensitive the individual is to the bites, the more severe the skin lesion. Fleas can be seen with the naked eye, but more often evidence on the hide is used for diagnosis. Pepper-like dander

which is digested blood excreted by the flea, can be pulled from the coat using a fine comb. Thankfully, safe, effective and convenient medications can be prescribed that can **TREAT** and **PREVENT** flea infestations.

In this area we see a lot of **ticks**. These creatures gross out many people and are very tough to kill and almost impossible to prevent. They can irritate the site where they attach, but are usually quite

sneaky and blood feed for several days without the host knowing! They are seasonal, typically April/May and Sept/Oct in areas with long grass. Although there are products that will kill ticks within a couple days, nothing prevents them from jumping on a pet. The best prevention is you! Look for ticks and pick them off. Grab right next to the skin and twist to ensure you remove the mouthparts. An irritated lump will form if the mouth is left in, but will heal with time. Thankfully, the local species of tick are not typical carriers of Lyme Disease, but screening for blood parasites annually is simple and a good idea if your companion has been bit by ticks or mosquitoes. **Spring is the time we check!**

Other parasitic infections like *sarcoptic mange* (Scabies), *demodectic mange*, ear mites and lice also cause itching and hair loss, but are not nearly as common. **Revolution®** is a topical medication that works well for ticks, fleas, ear mites and heartworm.

Infections with *bacteria* or *yeast/fungus* are the most common. Often infections are secondary since the skin normally has these organisms on its surface. It's when the surface is damaged that there is an infection. Good examples would be trauma to the skin like persistent itching or a scrape or burn; or a dirty, wet or matted hair coat. An infection of the skin is called "*pyoderma*" and how deep it invades the skin will dictate what the lesion looks like. It is usually painful and red with discharge and hair loss. When it invades deep, it is a medical emergency! One specific fungal infection is called "*Ringworm*". It is not a worm at all, but the skin lesion it causes is a hairless red ring that looks like a coiled worm! It is not very common, but it is a contagious infection that is also *zoonotic*, meaning that people can also contract it.



off the mark.com by Mark Parisi



## Thematic months

**April until July** – Wellness and Parasite Prevention

- Great discounts on wellness blood tests and parasite prevention products

**September and October** – Healthcare Exercise Appearance Requirements Targets

- Free food with wellness blood test and prize opportunities

**December and January** – Senior Pet Months

- Free food with wellness testing

**February and March** – Dental Awareness

- Free Dental assessments and free dental package and food with dental procedures





Viral skin lesions are uncommon and are usually accompanied by systemic illness, much like Chicken Pox or Measles infections in humans.

The final category we will discuss is **skin allergies**. This can be the most

FRUSTRATING of all the skin issues! Allergies can only be considered when all other categories of skin issues have been ruled-out. Skin allergies can't be "seen" with diagnostic tests like infections can. There are many things that can cause allergies, but the skin signs are very similar. One thing is for sure; these animals are itchy!! It drives people and pets crazy!

There is not usually a primary skin lesion with allergies, the patient just itches so much that they cause skin lesions. We call skin allergy an, "*Itch that rashes,*" rather than a, "*Rash that itches.*" Primary allergic animals often have concurrent secondary bacterial and/or yeast infections, and are very sensitive to parasitic infections.

**Atopy**, or **Atopic Dermatitis**, occurs when allergens *contact* the skin or are *inhaled* and cause an "over reaction" of the immune cells within the skin. Animals with atopy become very itchy; the resultant scratching leads to skin injuries and secondary (subsequent) skin infections. Atopy is more common in dogs than in cats and is usually first noticed under 3 years of age. Unfortunately, pets that develop atopy are usually plagued by skin problems throughout their lives.

Many types of allergens can cause a pet to develop atopy. A wide variety of pollens, grasses, danders, insect proteins/bites, molds, and even house dust can cause animals to develop atopy. Animals can even develop allergies to multiple allergens at the same time. It is thought that there is an allergic threshold, and if the amount of allergen is below the threshold, there will not be a response. With more exposure however, the patient will exceed the threshold and the severity of the itch will escalate accordingly. Once an animal develops atopy, the condition will continue as long as the animal is exposed to the allergen.

### Scrub-a-dub! Bathing Tip!

When using a pet shampoo, it is important to dilute the shampoo in a bucket of warm water, then pour the solution over your pet and work it in. LET IT SOAK FOR 10 MINUTES. It will not lather as much, but will distribute over the coat more evenly and rinses off easier. Contact time really helps clean the hide. Using a pet conditioner full-strength, letting it soak, then a gentle rinse, helps replenish the skin and hair.

**Food allergy** (also called **food hypersensitivity**) refers to a type of physical reaction to food. It looks very similar to atopy, but occurs when the immune system begins to overreact to protein ingredients that the pet has *eaten*. The list of known food allergens is extensive and includes beef, eggs, poultry, dairy, lamb, pork, fish, corn, wheat, soybeans, preservatives, and dyes. It is important to note that food allergies are often *acquired* and, therefore, can develop to a food that the animal has been eating for some time with no previous problems. Food allergy can also present as vomiting and diarrhea along with itchiness. This can give a clue that it is not *atopy*. Food allergy and atopy can occur together and each allergen will contribute to the allergic threshold of the patient, which further complicates the diagnosis!

Diagnosing and managing allergies can be lengthy! Identification of the specific allergen(s) is not easy, it can be inaccurate and is costly as it requires either intradermal skin tests or serological analysis. In most cases, an allergic management approach is taken instead. This usually requires multiple lifestyle changes and medications. It is the combination of efforts, not just one treatment, that manages allergies. It is a condition that can't be cured, but can be managed.



To manage food allergy, it seems obvious to just change the food. Although this is true, what the animal is switched to is VERY important. Even if the particular allergen is known and is completely avoided, it can take up to 12 weeks before the body has returned to normal!! This makes it hard to eliminate one protein at a time as it could take years. Thankfully, specific *hypoallergenic foods* do exist that are quite effective if there is a DEDICATED effort to feeding it EXCLUSIVELY. These foods also contain unique blends of nutrients and antioxidants that optimize the health of the skin and intestine even if there is not actually a food allergy. In other words, nutrition optimized for skin health is ideal for any type of allergy.

Atopy can be more challenging as many of the allergens are airborne and can't be entirely avoided. Medications to reduce the immune response are the most important. Simple oral **antihistamines**, like *Benadryl*® can be helpful, but often fail because they only suppress a specific aspect of a complicated immune reaction. **Steroids**, like *Prednisone* or *Dexamethasone*, are inexpensive and very broad in their immune suppression. They can effectively eliminate the itch, but their side effects are undesirable for long-term use. Cyclosporin A (*Atopica*®) can be very effective with few side effects and can be used long-term, but is relatively costly. Medicated shampoos and conditioners, when used properly and frequently, can be quite soothing. They are aimed at removing topical allergens and restoring the skin's nature lipid barrier. Omega 3/6 essential fatty acids are also vital for a healthy lipid barrier and have anti-inflammatory properties. They can be nutritionally supplemented by way of fish oils.

There is a lot to consider with the skin and coat of your companion, so if you have concerns, we would be glad to help you out.

*We're here for the ones that are there for you!*

### Ya' mean they shouldn't eat it!

Did you know the following foods can be TOXIC to your pet?

- Chocolate and Coffee
- Grapes and Raisins
- Onions and Garlic
- Products containing the sweetener "Xylitol"
- Macadamia Nuts
- Raw yeast dough

Animal Poison Control Centre (888) 426-4435.



Even Dogs Do IT...



**We love your pet pictures for our annual collage. Keep send'n 'em virtually or personally!**

### Refer a Friend Program

Our best advertising continues to be your **word-of-mouth** and we would like to thank you for it! We will apply a **\$10 credit** to your account for every new client referred by you that comes in for an appointment.\*

We also have food and nail trim **value cards**. With every 10 purchases you get the next one FREE.\*

*Gift certificates* are also available if you have a fellow pet lover.

*\*Some restrictions apply and may be offered for a limited time.*

### "A" Team..."A" is for animal

#### Reception

Kathy Groves  
Erin Voigt  
Dan Levin  
Cali (The best clinic cat!)

#### Technicians

Anne Thoman  
Patti Thirlwall  
Carolyn Fasken  
Deirdre Stuart  
Cody Longworth

#### Students

Katrina Jackson  
Emma Smith  
Sam Farquarson

#### Veterinarians

Dorothee Osmond  
Jamey Osmond  
Izabela MacDougall

*\*Dr. Lori Huerter has left the practice to fulfill a career goal. We wish her well and she will be missed.*

**We thank you for your support and we truly enjoy providing the healthcare and service you and your companions deserve!**

### Our Mission

*To deliver current veterinary care and compliment it with the service and value that you expect and deserve.*

*Communication is the cornerstone of effective healthcare because if our team can improve your understanding of an issue, then maintenance or restoration of your companion's health is more likely.*

*We strive to present a consistent message among all staff so that you also have a consistent experience each time you visit.*