Seborrhea In Dogs
Management in Shelters and Foster Homes
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‘Seborrhea’- term is obsolete Correct term: cornification defect

Excessive scales (flakes, ‘dandruff’) with or without oily skin and hair.
‘Seborrhea’ is:

- Clinical description, not a diagnosis
- Disruption in production epidermal cells and
- Causes
  - Primary—Hereditary—noted early in life, life long
  - Secondary—acquired, occurs as a result of other diseases, temporary
- Most common in dogs

Odor and scales that do not wash off...

Practical Anatomy
**Cornification**

- Importance of Epidermal Barrier
  - Prevents excessive water loss from skin
  - Prevents loss of other bodily fluids
  - Protects against UV damage
  - Protects against trauma
  - Part of the body’s immune system
  - Prevents against infection and invasion of micro-organisms

**Pathogenesis of Clinical Signs**

- Accumulations of scale and crust because of shortened epidermal cell turnover

- Irritation, inflammation, pruritus and odor develop because of changes in the composition of surface oils

- Frequent bacterial and yeast overgrowth/infections often with pruritus due to changes in the skin flora
‘Seborrhea sicca’-dry
‘Seborrhea oleosa’-greasy

• Clinical descriptors
• Not a specific disease
• Only of importance when determining topical therapy
• Avoid use of these terms!!!!

Primary Cornification Defect

• Hereditary with breed predisposition or random genetic abnormality
• Noted early in life for many conditions
• Manage, not cure
• Diagnose via ruling out other causes

Primary Breed Predisposition

• Primary cornification disorder
  • West Highland white terrier, cocker spaniel, basset hound, Doberman pincher, German shepherd, English springer spaniel, Irish setter, Labrador retriever
  • Vitamin A—most notably cocker spaniel
  • Zinc responsive
    • Alaskan malamute, Siberian husky, Samoyed, Pharaoh hound
  • Epidermal dysplasia-West Highland white terrier
  • Ichthyosis—golden retrievers, Jack Russell terrier, Norfolk terrier, American bull dog
Stopping the Scales, Greasiness and Odor of Seborrhea in Shelter and Foster Home Dogs

Primary Cornification

Severe Odor
Really, really big scales

Localized Disease

Localized Disease
Localized Disease

Secondary Cornification

Secondary to bacterial pyoderma
Secondary to parasites....

Secondary to yeast overgrowth

Common problem in allergic dogs..
Common in dogs with medical illnesses..

Common Scenario

ITCH

INFECTION
Spending Money Wisely

- Consider global health of dog and address issues
  - Vaccination
  - Nutrition
  - Endo-parasite control
- Assume seborrhea is secondary, until proven otherwise
  - Ectoparasite control
  - Skin cytology for bacterial or yeast overgrowth

What does this ‘look like’?

- Intake: vaccinations, standard deworming, appropriate diet and adequate feeding
  - Flea control/contagious parasite treatment q 2 weeks for 6 weeks
- In house diagnostics
  - Hair trichogram to look for demodicosis
  - Skin cytology for yeast
  - Wood’s lamp-high risk of false positives
  - Bacterial overgrowth is common, at least treat topically

Other Diagnostics

- If animal is otherwise healthy, routine laboratory work is rarely helpful
  - Allergy work up?
  - Thyroid function tests?
  - Adrenal function tests?
  - Skin biopsy indications
Diagnosis Via Biopsy

• Vitamin A responsive skin disease
• Zinc responsive skin disease
• Medical conditions-cutaneous lymphoma
• Sebaceous adenitis
• Lichenoid psoriasiform dermatitis of springer spaniels
• Nasal parakeratosis-when ruling out from immune mediated
• Maybe helpful in ichyosis, primary cornification diseases..

Lichenoid psoriasiform dermatitis
Bathing and Grooming

- Always indicated
- Cannot over bathe the dog

Topical Therapy-What You Need

- ONE cleansing shampoo
- One combined antibacterial/antifungal shampoo
- One combination tar and sulfur or salicylic acid shampoo
- One good degreasing shampoo
  - *Benzoyl peroxide* (degreasing and antimicrobial)
- One moisturizing product
  - 50% propylene glycol
  - Commercial product
- One non-irritating ear cleaner

Shampoo Therapy Simplified

- Step 1: Instill ear cleaner
- Step 2: Bathe dog in a cleansing shampoo to remove debris
  - Apply pre-diluted shampoo (1:2 - 1:4), wash, rinse
- Step 3: Alternate bathing with antimicrobial shampoo and anti-seborrheic shampoo
  - Apply pre-diluted shampoo (1:2 - 1:4), wash, rinse
- Rinse again and again
- Step 4: Finish cleaning ears
Seborrheic Otitis

- Increased ear secretions
- Ceruminous otitis leads to bacterial overgrowth and chronic inflammation and ODOR
- Treat microbial overgrowth
- Clean ears at every bath
- Topical ear steroids maybe very helpful
  - 1:1 dilution of propylene glycol and 2mg/kg of dexamethasone

How Often???
Nasal and Digital Hyperkeratosis

Ear Margin Hyperkeratosis

Medical Treatment?
What Foster Families Can Do

• Dog with chronic seborrheic otitis
  • Important to determine if medical or surgical
  • 30 day treatment period needs to be done in a home
  • 1 mg/kg orally once daily for 15-30 days
For example…..

Dog that needs temporary intensive bathing to achieve remission

Or this….. Do not squeeze!
Transitioning to a Permanent Home

- Information on what best controls the odor and scale
- What's the most you have to do and when?
- What are the early signs of a relapse?
- What products work? Or what products are irritating?
- Information on all diagnostic testing
- Is problem secondary?
- If secondary what does new primary care veterinarian need to pursue?

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