

Pruritis (Itchiness)

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Overview

Pruritus or itching is an unpleasant sensation that causes a pet to scratch or bite. It is caused by chemical reactions that occur in the skin and stimulate the nerves, causing the brain to feel the itch. In fact, the act of scratching itself may stimulate these inflammatory reactions in the skin and make the condition worse. Any skin condition that causes inflammation can cause pruritus.

Pruritus is associated with other skin diseases, including secondary bacterial skin infections and secondary yeast infections. But it is the main symptom of skin conditions like allergies and skin parasites.

How pruritus affects your pet's health depends on the degree of the pruritus. Mild pruritus may hardly have any effect at all. However, severe pruritus leads to intense scratching, which may result in painful skin lesions that may become infected. Your pet may cry out and have trouble sleeping.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Pruritus is generally diagnosed by a complete history and physical examination. Skin scrapings and fungal cultures may be recommended to try to determine an underlying cause of the itchiness.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. The underlying cause should be treated but temporary relief can be obtained with antihistamines, fatty acid supplements, soothing shampoos and corticosteroids. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Scratching or biting
- Chronic licking, especially of feet
- Excessive grooming in cats
- Hair loss
- Skin lesions

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*