

THE PET CONNECTION

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ITCHY, SMELLY DOG? IT MIGHT BE A YEAST INFECTION

OK, this is a topic dear to my heart at the moment because my own dogs are suffering from the “Oh my gosh, can't stop itching, scratching, and wow do they smell like moldy bread!” syndrome.

Coincidentally many of our grooming customers have been experiencing the same frustrating licky/itches with their pooches. So I decided that a little research was in order, and, after an extensive amount of Googling, I've come to the conclusion it's quite possible that many of our furry kids are suffering from yeast infections.

My first discovery was that all dogs (and people too!) have a naturally occurring light layer of yeast on their bodies. Yuck right?! But it's all very normal, and a healthy immune system keeps the amount of this yeast in check. However, when this yeast grows out of control certain symptoms can develop which include itching, red or rashy skin, a flaking/goeey residue in ears and between toes, and a very distinct musty odor. Some dogs will scoot their rumps across the floor to relieve rectal itching.

Fact #2 – Yeast is a spore like fungus, which eats, guess what? Sugar! So what you feed your pet, especially one suffering from a yeast infection, really matters. If your dog is yeasty you'll need to carefully read his pet food and treat labels and avoid products containing high fructose corn syrup, sugar (even honey), corn, wheat and potatoes. Think carbohydrate free and you'll be on the right track. It is also recommended that you add some natural anti-fungal foods to the diet, like a small amount of garlic, oregano, or white vinegar.

Fact #3 - In addition to providing an anti-yeast diet, and anti-fungal foods, I discovered that it's really, really important to disinfect yeasty body parts.

Disinfecting Yeasty Ears - Using witch hazel and cotton balls remove all the debris around and inside the ear canal. (Do not stick Q-tips into the canals of your dog's ears). Do this as often as you need to keep the ear free of debris and smelling clean. If witch hazel alone doesn't do the trick try adding a few drops of white vinegar to the cotton balls. By the way, when a dog scratches at his yeast infected ears with his paws he can spread the infection to his feet, so it's really important to disinfect those ears.

Paw Soak - Since yeast lives under the nail beds and in the creases of your dog's paws you'll need to submerge those little pooch tootsies if your going to kill the yeast. Soak feet in the following solution: 1 gallon of water, a cup of hydrogen peroxide, and 2 cups of white vinegar. Just pat the paws dry. Leaving the solution dried on your dog's paws serve as an anti fungal, and should also reduce licking and digging at the paws. (This one really worked for me with my two Jack Russel babies :) It can be done as often as necessary to get results, but I would start with twice a day.

Anti-Yeast Baths and Rinses – Disinfecting the entire body at least once a week with an anti-fungal shampoo was recommended. Interestingly, oatmeal shampoos were discouraged, as oatmeal is a grain which provides a food source for that yeast on your dog's skin. Shampoos containing tea tree oil, or other herbal blends were preferred.

I also found some great recipes for anti-fungal rinses, these really helped my guys!

Mix a gallon of water with a cup of vinegar OR a cup of lemon juice. You can also use 20 drops of peppermint oil (Yummy!). Pour the gallon of solution over your dog, taking care to avoid the head and

eyes. Rub it into the coat and skin, focusing on body parts that tend to grow yeast – armpits, feet, groin area, and around the tail. Just towel your dog after, and leave the solution to dry on the coat. This can be done one to three times a week, and is especially helpful during the summer months.

Fact #4 - Several veterinarians cautioned against the use of antibiotics and steroids to control yeast infections. While the use of these drugs often alleviate symptoms, they do not address the underlying cause of the yeast infection, and often make a bad situation worse because they suppress the animal's natural immune system.

OK guys, that's the scoop on those “yeastie beasties”! I hope this information helps you to help your puppies :)

If you have a question about this month's topic, or would like to suggest a topic for a future column of The Pet Connection send an email : Debbie@PamperedPawsSalon.com