

Paws and Puddles A Comprehensive Guide: Skin Health of Pets in Monsoon

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Monsoon season brings a welcome relief from the summer heat, but it also creates a high-humidity environment that is a breeding ground for various dermatological issues in pets. Elevated humidity and moisture retention compromise the skin's natural barrier, leading to a surge in various bacterial, fungal, and parasitic infections.

Common Monsoon Skin Ailments in Pets

- **Canine Atopic Dermatitis & Flare-ups**

Hypersensitivity reactions induced due to increased environmental allergens combined with humidity.

Clinical Signs: Intense pruritus (itching), erythema (redness) of the skin (especially paws, groin, and axillae), recurrent ear infections (otitis externa), and self-trauma through excessive licking or scratching.

- **Malassezia Dermatitis (Fungal Overgrowth)**

The yeast *Malassezia pachydermatis* grows in moist, warm environments like skin folds, ear canals, and interdigital spaces.

Clinical Signs: Greasy, thickened skin (lichenification), hyperpigmentation, a characteristic rancid or “corn-chip” or “frito-like” odor, scaling and brown /rusty discoloration of hair of interdigital space.



- **Dermatophytosis (Ringworm)**

Fungal species such as *Microsporum canis* and *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* spreads rapidly in humid conditions among pets, particularly cats. It is of zoonotic importance.

Clinical Signs: Circular, patchy areas of alopecia, broken hairs, scaling, and mild crusting.

Mange Type	Primary Host	Main Anatomical Distribution	Key Clinical Hallmarks
Sarcoptic Mange	Dogs	Ear margins, elbows, hocks, ventrum	Intense pruritus, thick crusts, highly contagious
Demodicosis	Dogs & Cats	Face, periocular, forelegs (Localized); Entire body (Generalized)	Alopecia, scaling, follicular plugging, potential deep pyoderma
Notoedric Mange/Feline Scabies	Cats	Face, ears, neck, spreading rapidly	Thick gray-yellow crusts, severe localized scratching

- **Superficial Pyoderma (Bacterial Infections)** Bacterial infections (most commonly *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*) secondary to moisture exposure, insect bites, or scratching.

Clinical Signs: Pustules, papules, epidermal collarettes, crusts, and localized hair loss.

- **Flea, Tick, and Fly Strike Infestations** High humidity in monsoon accelerates the life cycles of ectoparasites and also attracts flies, which can cause painful bites on the ear tips of dogs (fly strike dermatitis).

Clinical Signs: Flea dirt, pruritus, localized crusts on ear margins, and tick-borne pathogen symptoms (lethargy, fever).

- **Mange (scabies)** Mange is a common, highly pruritic (itchy) parasitic skin disease caused by various species of microscopic mites.

Types of mange in small animals is shown in following Table:

- *Sarcoptic mange is zoonotic and can cause a temporary, self-limiting papular rash in humans.*

Diagnosis:

Skin scraping, cytology, fungal culture and Wood's lamp examination where indicated.

Management and Therapeutic Approaches :

Treatment after proper diagnosis of the condition can be done by following

- **Targeted Therapy:** Treatment should be done according to the causative agents .
- **Antifungals:** Itraconazole/Ketoconazole for confirmed dermatophytosis or severe *Malassezia dermatitis*.
- **Antibiotics:** Culture-guided antibiotics for deep or widespread pyoderma.
- **Supportive and Symptomatic Treatment :**
- **Anti-pruritics:** Oclacitinib, Lokivetmab or short-course corticosteroids for allergic flares.
- **Ectoparasiticides:** Isoxazolines (e.g., fluralaner, sarolaner) and appropriate species-specific parasiticides for fleas, ticks and mites.



- Medicated shampoos: Chlorhexidine (2–4%) + Miconazole (2%) for bacterial/yeast overgrowth; initially twice weekly.
- Topical products: Mousses, sprays or wipes for localized hot spots and interdigital dermatitis.
- Veterinary guidance: Treatment should follow confirmed diagnosis and veterinarian-prescribed dosing.

Prevention Strategies for Pet Parents

- Keep dry & clean: Dry the pet thoroughly after walks, especially paws, toe webs, skin folds and under the tail.
- Daily brushing: Prevents matting and moisture retention.
- Avoid very short clipping: The coat provides natural protection against minor injuries and insects.
- Dry environment: Keep bedding and living areas dry and well-ventilated.
- Clean bedding: Wash weekly and dry completely, preferably in sunlight.
- Omega fatty acids: EPA/DHA and omega-3/6 support the skin barrier.
- Neem care: Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) may be used topically for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Regular Veterinary Checks: Schedule early consultations at the first sign of excessive scratching, odor, or coat changes before minor issues develop into severe dermatitis.

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