

Feline eosinophilic dermatitis

Overview

Feline eosinophilic dermatitis is a skin problem in cats. There are three main types, which all affect different parts of the body:

- Eosinophilic ulcers (affects lips)
- Eosinophilic plaques (affects skin)
- Eosinophilic granulomas (affects skin and the mouth)

Eosinophilic dermatitis is most commonly caused by an allergy.

Contact your vet if you notice anything wrong with your cat's skin. Eosinophilic dermatitis is a very manageable condition if you seek advice and treatment from your vet.

Feline eosinophilic dermatitis explained

Eosinophils are cells that float around in the blood. Eosinophilic dermatitis is a type of allergic reaction that causes these eosinophils to gather at the surface of the skin and cause a problem.

Eosinophilic dermatitis is a very manageable condition if you seek advice and treatment from your vet. Left untreated, eosinophilic dermatitis will make your cat unwell and miserable.

Symptoms

There are three main types of eosinophilic skin disease. Each type affects a different part of the body and causes slightly different symptoms:

Eosinophilic ulcers (indolent or rodent ulcers)

- Affect lips and roof of the mouth
- Swollen, eroded, red patches with raised edges
- Often not itchy or painful

Eosinophilic plaques

- Affect the skin on the tummy, inner thighs, armpits, face and neck
- Large patches of red, raised, thickened skin
- Hair loss (alopecia)
- Itchy
- Ulceration and weeping

Eosinophilic granuloma

- Affect skin anywhere on the body (commonly the mouth, feet, back legs and chin)
- Mildly itchy
- Raised, off white, nodules or ridges
- 'Fat-chin' – eosinophilic granulomas on the chin often cause swelling.

Causes

Eosinophilic dermatitis is a type of allergic reaction to things such as:

- Food (food allergy)
- Something in the environment (atopic dermatitis)
- Fleas (flea allergy) and mosquitoes

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if your cat has any of the symptoms above, if you spot a skin lump, ulcer, sore or if your cat has an uncomfortable mouth.

You know your cat best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

Treatment

Eosinophilic dermatitis is a very manageable condition if you seek advice and treatment from your vet. Treatment may include:

Avoiding allergy triggers

If you can find out what your cat is allergic to you may be able to stop the allergy all together. This is only possible if the triggers are avoidable (i.e. food or fleas).

If your cat is allergic to something in the environment such as pollens, moulds or dust mites, avoidance is much more difficult.

Medicine to reduce allergy and swelling

Steroids might be used to reduce your cat's allergic reaction and any inflammation associated with it. They can be given as cream, injection or tablets.

In more severe cases immunosuppressive drugs may be needed to reduce the allergic reaction.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics aren't often needed unless a skin infection has developed.

Other

Occasionally anti-histamines are used alongside other drugs to help reduce symptoms.

Surgery

Most cats will get better with medical treatment, but in more severe cases your vet may suggest surgery to help speed up recovery.

Ongoing treatment may be necessary if your cat's symptoms come back once treatment stops.

Home care

Buster collar

Your vet may advise a buster collar or a protective dressing until your cat's skin is less itchy.

Food

You will need to feed soft food if your cat's condition affects his / her mouth.

Flea treatment

Strict flea control is essential in cats with eosinophilic skin disease. Their symptoms will be much worse if they suffer fleabites.

Outlook

Most cats with eosinophilic skin disease respond well to treatment. If your cat isn't improving it may be necessary to refer them to a skin specialist.

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