

Lick Granuloma

Lick granulomas are a common problem seen in dogs. It is a skin condition that usually results from the pet's urge to lick the lower portion of their legs and paws. The lesion can be red, swollen, irritated, and bleeding. Incessant licking eventually results in a thickened, firm, oval plaque that does not heal easily. Eventually, the nerves can become inflamed causing the pet to itch and lick even more, thus starting a cycle which can turn into a chronic condition.

Causes:

There are many factors, both physical and psychological, that could potentially cause a lick granuloma.

Some of the most common causes are:

- **Allergies:**

Allergies bring about inflamed, itchy skin causing the pet to lick the skin for relief.

- **Arthritis and Pain:**

Lick granulomas can also be a result of pain due to an arthritic knee or ankle, sore muscles, or pain from trauma or old wounds.

- **Foreign Objects:**

A foreign object such as a splinter can get the dog focused on that particular spot. The dog will then start licking it in an attempt to remove the object and reduce the pain and discomfort.

- **Fungal Infections:**

Deep seated fungal infections, such as ringworm, can also initiate the licking.

- **Separation Anxiety/Stress:**

In some cases pets become anxious when separated from their owners, or when bad weather is occurring. One common theory about licking is that licking releases endorphins (feel good chemicals) from the pet's brain, and therefore the pet begins to associate licking with feeling good.

Treatment:

Once a lick granuloma is diagnosed, the next step is to address the underlying issue that is causing the licking, whether it be allergies, arthritis, or anxiety. The secondary problems, (skin lesions caused by licking), are most commonly treated with antibiotics and/or anti-inflammatory medicines. An E-collar may be helpful in preventing the pet from reaching the affected area.