



# THE WINN FELINE FOUNDATION

For the Health and Well-Being of All Cats

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## HEALTH NEWS

From THE WINN FELINE FOUNDATION

Summaries by Betty White 9/07

**“The 6 Top Skin Problems Plaguing Vets.”** Author Jessica Tremayne interviewed several veterinarians, veterinary researchers, and a veterinary insurance company spokesperson to determine the leading skin problems of dogs and cats. Allergies/atopy (environmental) causes head the list. Allergies, on a national scale, far surpass any other dermatological issue for companion animals. New methods of control have made the long-term management of allergies much safer, more effective, and easier for both pets and their owners. These methods include integrated allergy management, immunotherapy (regular, individualized, and rush protocols), and cyclosporine. Treatment needs to be specific for the animal, because allergies are life-long and they often vary in intensity depending upon the time of year, presence of secondary bacteria or yeast infections, periodic exposure to parasites, and the frequency of topical therapies. Weekly baths make a tremendous difference in allergic animals. However, the best long-term treatment for itching pets is allergy injections. Steroids are useful for quick fixes, but cats are prone to diabetes and heart failure when taking steroids for prolonged periods of time.

Fleas and ticks account for the second leading cause of skin problems. New long-acting insecticides are a boon in treating these pests, particularly a newly-introduced product for cats, metaflumizone. This product, available as Promeris by Fort Dodge Animal Health, is used for the control of fleas in cats for up to six weeks.

Recurrent bacterial and yeast infections are another skin problem. A new plague beginning to receive attention involves methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and other methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* strains. Called the “newest big thing in companion animal dermatology,” the disease can be difficult to diagnose and may be transferable between pets and owners. There are no documented cases involving cats, but a study of an MRSA strain detected at the University of Liverpool’s Small Animal Hospital during 2004-2005 is identical to the human epidemic strain EMRSA-15 that was found in three dogs and three staff members. This resistant form of *Staphylococcus* is primarily found in nasal, perianal, mouth, and groin tissues.

Three other prevalent skin problems are otitis externa and otitis media -- infections of the outer and middle ear -- parasitic mites (*Otodectes cynotis*), and keratinization disorders (e.g., seborrhea). Mites are easily treated, but they demand immediate attention because of the secondary danger of bacterial and yeast infections. Products containing phytosphingosine (e.g., Douxo® products by Sogeval) are useful in the management of seborrheic disorders, surface infections, and acne, as well as products containing the antiseptic, piroctone olamine.

[Tremayne, J. (2007). The 6 Top Skin Problems Plaguing Vets. *Veterinary Practice News*. August, 2007: 16-17.]

**“Topical Ketoconazole in Antifungal Therapy.”** Louis N. Gotthelf, DVM, discusses new products now available that mix antibacterial agents with the antifungal agent ketoconazole. In the form of shampoos and preparations for the ears (otics), these products treat dermatitis cases where either mixed microbes are involved or a broad-spectrum treatment is indicated. Shampoo therapy helps to relieve itching, decreases inflammation, removes antigens from the skin, debrides dead skin cells, degreases seborrheic patches, and kills micro-organisms on the skin. If left in contact with the skin for at least 15 minutes, these shampoos are actually able to benefit the skin cells. Specifically, 1 percent ketoconazole has been added to shampoos for dogs and cats in order to treat *Malassezia* dermatitis and dermatophytosis (ringworm). While dogs may benefit from the oral administration of ketoconazole, cats cannot receive this drug orally. It causes anorexia and liver damage. Ketoconazole has an affinity for grease, so it should be used on a skin surface that has been degreased. The more grease on the skin, the smaller the amount of ketoconazole that will be available to bind to the yeast or fungus. Further, the drug is not very soluble in water. Used in a shampoo, the less water dilution there is, the higher the concentration on the skin cells.

Topical ketoconazole shampoo therapy for ringworm helps to reduce the shedding of spores. In addition, this therapy may preclude the necessity for expensive, systemic antifungal drugs. The odor of the shampoo is much less offensive than other topicals to treat ringworm, such as lime sulfur. However, the shampoo may be used in conjunction with lime sulfur if desired.

[Gotthelf, L. (2007). Topical Ketoconazole in Antifungal Therapy. *Veterinary Practice News*. August, 2007: 18-19.]

**“Urinary Biomarkers to Assess Exposure of Cats to Environmental Tobacco Smoke.”**

This study by researchers at the University of Minnesota Cancer Center and the College of Veterinary Medicine sought to evaluate the use of urinary biomarkers to assess exposure to cats in the homes of smokers. There were 61 client-owned cats in the study, 19 from smoking households and 42 from households in which there was no smoking.

The results of the study indicated that cats from households in which smoking was reported had significantly higher concentrations of total nicotine, total cotinine, and total NNAL (butanol) in urine compared with concentrations for cats that lived in smoke-free households.

In conclusion, the data provided biochemical evidence of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and the uptake of tobacco-specific carcinogens by cats living with smokers. The biomarkers could aid the investigation of the health effects of environmental tobacco smoke in cats and other species.

[McNiel, E. and others (2007). Urinary Biomarkers to Assess Exposure of Cats to Environmental Tobacco Smoke. *American Journal of Veterinary Research*. April 2007: 349-353.]

**“Chronic Nasal Discharge in Cats.”** Researchers at the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine studied the medical records of 75 cats with nasal discharge that persisted longer than one month. A specific cause of the discharge (etiologic diagnosis) was identified in only 36% of the cats. The most common diagnosis of these cats was carcinoma or lymphoma. Sneezing and vomiting were the most common concurrent clinical signs. Routine tests, such as complete blood cell count (CBC), serum biochemical panel, and urinalysis did not help to isolate the cause of the nasal discharge. Definite diagnosis was more likely in older cats and cats that were tested by advanced imaging studies and nasal biopsy. It is important to note that none of the 75 cats were tested for feline herpesvirus or calicivirus.

While advanced diagnostic testing, such as imaging studies and nasal biopsies, increase the possibility of definitive diagnoses, the cause of chronic nasal discharge in cats may remain elusive.

[Demko, J. and Cohn, L. (2007). Chronic Nasal Discharge in Cats: 75 Cases (1993-2004). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. April 2007: 1032-1037.]

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