

BFCA *Health Times*

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IN THIS ISSUE

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Update on Combatting Skin Problems/Allergies article by Vickie Halstead

CHIC and 5 Star Awards report by Paula Hendricks

COMBATTING SKIN PROBLEMS AND ALLERGIES

By Vickie Halstead RN, CVNS, CLNC

Writing scientific articles with all references cited is my preference. Instead, this article contains my opinions and medical facts derived from scientific materials that I read over the years. Utilizing nutrition to prevent or treat illness has been an interest of mine since I graduated from nursing school in 1973, which led me to taking vitamin supplements and giving supplements to my dogs. Therefore I could not list all the references I have read, but I did include a few of my recent sources. My hope is that this information will improve the health of our Bichons.

Next, I want to help you understand the physiology of skin problems. The incidence of at least one episode of a skin issue in Bichons has been cited as high as 50%. Bichons that have less pigment, i.e. mostly pink skin, are more prone to skin problems. The skin is the largest organ of the body, which is our primary defense against the environment. The primary function of the hair covering the skin of a dog is to protect and insulate the skin. Changes in the skin and coat caused by disease process may take 4 weeks to develop, and at least 4 weeks to appreciate improvement in the skin and coat after treatment.

The skin is the window to the inner health of dogs. The skin is the first organ to exhibit signs of shock, poor nutrition, and the accumulation of toxins or contaminants in the body exhibited by changes in the condition of the skin, a loss of luster in the coat, and thinning of the coat. Atopy, allergy to airborne substances, is typically evidenced in the skin of a dog as opposed to humans who tend to exhibit respiratory, nasal and eye issues. Read more about Atopy: <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/Atopy.htm>

Other organs that help to detoxify the body by cleansing the blood are the lungs, kidneys, and liver. With so many chemicals and toxins in the environment (allergens, lawn chemicals,

chemicals on streets and sidewalks used to treat snow/ice, pollution, pollen, the flea and tick prevention medications, bug sprays, room deodorizers, chemicals or preservatives in foods, and chemicals in cleaning agents), these organs may be not be able to prevent contaminated blood from flowing to the life-sustaining organs and to the skin, which acquires more than the other organs being the largest organ. In addition to skin problems, chronic autoimmune diseases can develop from an excess of toxins in the blood that include diabetes, pancreatitis, liver dysfunction, Cushing's disease, kidney disease, lupus, arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, inflamed arteries, thrombocytopenia (blood disease), and anemia. It should be noted that most skin diseases and allergies are considered autoimmune disorders. Read more about autoimmune diseases: <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/DefAutoimmune.asp>.

The signs of skin problems and allergies include scratching, hair loss, frequent licking or chewing, rubbing body parts on carpet or furniture, rashes on the skin, blisters, and hot spots or skin lesions. Some dogs develop a lick granuloma, a hot spot, from a tiny sore on the skin. If the dog continues to lick the sore, it spreads and becomes wet and oozing. Chewing can become a behavior issue, which may require veterinary treatment. Anti-anxiety medications may be needed to change the behavior. A holistic veterinarian who has augmented knowledge of nutrition is best equipped to treat a Bichon with skin problems or allergies. <http://www.holisticvetlist.com>

The dilemma we face is trying to determine the cause of the skin problem so it can properly be treated, instead of masking it with drugs. Potential causes of skin problems are: allergies, autoimmune diseases, mange (mite infestation), fleas, whipworm, bacterial or yeast infections, thyroid disorders, exposure to chemicals, and dry skin. For more information on these causes read the many pertinent articles on www.bichonhealth.org. The possibility exists that some of these causes can be inherited, or at least the dog may have a genetic predisposition to develop the disease. Therefore, as responsible breeders we should not be breeding Bichons with skin problems or allergies. Many veterinarians will blame the skin problem on allergies, which can be very expensive to treat. True allergies often are inherited from one or both parents. This allergic dog forms antibodies to certain elements in the environment (allergens) such as mold, dust, smoke, pollen, chemicals, or food ingredients. A dog with a strong immune system can tolerate these allergens, despite being genetically programmed to have allergies.

Treatment of skin problems is very challenging. Often veterinarians prescribe steroids, which is successful for the short term but the problem returns once the drug is discontinued. These are the three primary reasons that I would not allow my dogs to be treated with steroids for skin problems: (1) Steroids can produce many serious, life-threatening adverse reactions such as hypertension, atherosclerosis, cardiac arrhythmias, seizures, ulcers and/or stomach upset, electrolyte imbalances, kidney failure, high glucose levels, increased susceptibility to infection, blood clotting abnormalities, personality changes, glaucoma, and many more; (2) Steroids can cause autoimmune diseases which Bichons have a tendency to develop; and (3) Bichons seem to be predisposed to develop Cushing's disease, pancreatitis, or diabetes due to steroid therapy. Read this article: <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/Prednisone.htm>

Prevention, in my opinion, is the key for allergies and skin problems. It is important to arm those dogs that are genetically programmed to have allergies with the ability to fight the allergic

response by fortifying their immune system. Prevention involves feeding your dog a variety of healthy foods and adding appropriate supplements to boost the immune system and promote healthy skin. Dry kibble cannot meet all the nutritional requirements of a dog, especially one that is used for breeding or showing. In addition, the nutrients in dry kibble may be damaged during the processing. My recommendations for a healthy diet and supplements can be found in this article: <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/HealthyDiet.htm>. The proteins in the diet must vary to prevent allergies secondary to repeated exposure to the same protein.

Here is an example of a recipe for a home cooked meal for a 10-pound dog:

2 oz chicken dark meat with skin (remove bones after cooking)

Alternate ground beef on some days

1 oz beef liver once per week

Cooked fish or canned mackerel once per week

1/4 cup enriched egg noodles or brown rice

Carrots and other vegetables

Chicken broth

One egg with the shell

Feed as required to maintain a healthy weight.

Prevention of skin problems also involves avoiding excessive vaccinations (Do not give more often than every 3 years.) and preventive medications for fleas and ticks, both of which can precipitate autoimmune diseases. Remember, allergies and most skin problems are autoimmune diseases. Ask yourself; does the benefit outweigh the risk for treating a **housedog** for fleas and ticks with these chemicals? See this article for advice on vaccinations <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/Vaccines.htm>, and this article about preventive medications <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/PreventiveParasites.htm> I feel so strongly about this topic that I include guidelines for administration of vaccinations in my puppy sales contracts, and forbid buyers to give preventives for fleas and ticks. Also, the contract identifies that rabies vaccinations must be given one month apart from other vaccinations to avoid reactions.

Probiotic supplements, containing beneficial bacteria for the gut, must be considered in the treatment and prevention of skin problems and autoimmune diseases. The intestinal tract plays a major role in nutrient absorption, plus it is usually the first line of defense for the body to develop an immune response against disease. The natural flora of bacteria in the intestinal tract must be balanced for the dog to maintain a healthy immune response to allergens, toxins, and infections. An imbalance can cause susceptibility to infections, allergies, skin problems, inflammatory conditions, autoimmune diseases, reproductive problems, and a shorter life span. Puppies are born with a sterile gut and obtain their healthy intestinal flora balance from the mother, which stays with them for the rest of their life, until stresses later in life upset this balance. Giving probiotics that include lactobacilli, bifidobacteria and enterococcus can improve digestion, synthesize vitamins, inhibit the growth of bacteria that cause disease, and produce immune stimulating factors and anti-inflammatory properties. Probiotics can be purchased in health food stores and from some pet supply companies, and are contained in yogurt, some dry dog foods, and some dog supplements. I give my Bichons daily doses of either Probiotics or yogurt, especially during treatment with antibiotics that kill invading bacteria as well as beneficial bacteria.

Supplements that promote healthy skin and coat while boosting immune function to help fight allergies and infections include Vitamins E, several B vitamins, and the omega 3 and 6 fatty acids. Garlic has healing properties, blocks certain enzymes associated with infections, and promotes a healthy cardiovascular system. The combination of garlic and one of the B vitamins produces an odor that helps repel mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks. I have never given my Bichons any flea or tick preventives, and they have no problems with these pests. BFCA receives many reports of Bichons that develop serious autoimmune diseases or die after receiving some of the preventives.

Skin problems need to be tackled from the inside, as I've discussed, but also from the outside. Avoid any whitening or brightening shampoos which can be irritating to the skin. Do not bathe your Bichon more often than every 2 weeks to avoid drying the skin, and rinse thoroughly to prevent skin irritation from residual shampoo. Use a medicated shampoo if skin problems exist, allow your dog to soak in the shampoo at least as long as directed on the bottle, and use a conditioner to moisturize the skin. Use a mild laundry detergent for washing bedding for your dog. Prevent exposing your dog to chemicals in the grass in yards and parks, on streets or sidewalks treated for snow/ice, and in cleaning agents. Either protect the feet with booties for walks or wash the feet after a walk. Once the pads are exposed to the chemicals, the dog may lick the feet due to the irritation causing the chemicals to be ingested, thereby becoming a systemic toxicity (in the blood) that affects the skin and other organs.

When bathing your Bichon, assure that the shampoo is totally rinsed out of the coat. Consider a final rinse of $\frac{3}{4}$ water and $\frac{1}{4}$ white vinegar after fully rinsing the dog of the shampoo, which helps remove all the soap from the skin and helps kill yeast.

Here are some good shampoos for skin problems:

- Espana protein antiseptic/healing shampoo <http://www.espanaproducts.com>
- Human product: Neutrogena T/Gel Therapeutic Shampoo
- Human and dog product: Nature's Sunshine Concentrate (1/2 capfull per 2 quarts water, shampoo and rinse)
http://www.theherbplace.com/personalcarepage1c17/353-Sunshine_Concentrate_Cleaner_p_353.html

If your Bichon has actual hot spots, here are some topical medications you can try:

1. Neo-Predef with Tetracaine powder that is prescribed by your veterinarian
2. BFI powder made by Beecham, which you may be able to purchase at drug stores
3. Hydrocortisone cream that you buy at the drug store.
4. Spray Solarcaine (buy from the drug store) on the hot spot and then apply alum powder (a pickling agent you can buy at the grocery store)
5. Teatree oil or spray has also been successful in deterring the chewing due to the taste, and may also help in healing.
6. Peace & Kindness—a colloidal silver spray from www.chrissystems.com
7. Apply from a spray bottle a solution of 1/3 listerine, 1/3 baby oil, and 1/3 water
8. Dermacool, a topical spray, from www.petvetdirect.com
9. Lavendar oil applied to the hot spot
10. Espana protein antiseptic topical spray
<http://www.espanaproducts.com/itemdetail.php?sku=ESP2000DC&=>

The Bichon Frise Club of America (BFCA) has donated funds to a current research project on allergies, which is being conducted by Bruce Hammerberg, DVM, PhD, at the North Carolina State University. Since allergies/skin problems are the number one health problem in Bichons, this study is paramount. Dr. Hammerberg is requesting our assistance in sending blood samples via your veterinarian from Bichons with a diagnosis of allergies and the parents, if possible. If you can help, contact him via email at Bruce_Hammerberg@ncsu.edu for more details.

In summary, serious skin problems not only can be expensive to treat, but the owner and the Bichon suffer needlessly. Often this condition can be prevented or resolved with a healthy nutritional program, good skin care, and selective breeding practices. Prevention involves providing a diet that is nutritious and contains a variety of ingredients, providing vitamin supplements, and avoiding chemical irritants to the skin, excessive vaccinations and preventives for fleas and ticks.

Selected References:

1. An Apple a Day: The ABC's of Diet and Disease, by Barb Bancroft, RN. WellWorth Publishing, 2001.
2. The Truth About Pet Products, by R. L. Wysong, DVM. Inquiry Press, 2002.
3. Food Pets Die For, by Ann N. Martin. NewSage Press, 2003.
4. Protect Your Pet, by Ann N. Martin. NewSage Press, 2001.
5. Natural Health for Dogs & Cats, by Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, PhD, and Susan Hubble Pitcairn. Rodale Press, 1982.
6. How to Have a Healthier Dog, by Wendell O. Belfield, DVM. Library of Congress, 1981.
7. Websites of interest:
 - Linus Pauling Institute <http://lpi.oregonstate.edu>
 - Wysong Inc. <http://www.wysong.net>
 - Billinghurst's BARF diet (raw) <http://www.barfworld.com>
 - Bichon Frise Club of America (BFCA) <http://www.bichon.org>
 - BFCA health web site <http://bichonhealth.org>
 - Whole Dog Journal <http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/>
 - See their annually published list of Top Dog Foods for Total Wellness
 - Whole Dog Journal re home prepared diets http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/15_7/features/Home-Prepared-Dog-Food-Nutritional-Information_20568-1.html
 - <http://www.monicasegal.com/>
 - Web site for a lab that does blood testing for allergies and supplies the appropriate serums: <http://www.greerlabs.com/vet/vet.allergcomplete.php>

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April 8, 2014

CHIC REPORT 4TH QUARTER 2013

SUMMARY OF TOTAL CHIC NUMBERS AND UPDATES FOR BFCA TO DATE

ORIGINAL QUALIFIERS	362	July 2007
TOTAL NEW QUALIFIERS	832	March 2014
ORIGINAL UPDATES	52	July 2007
TOTAL UPDATES	354	March 2014

CHIC 5 STAR AWARDS

Allure's U Chenoa Joe	Lisa Des Camps	10/01/10
Bella Diamella Sunday Surprise	Stephanie Uva, Katherine Dillon	8/19/12
Bibelot's Destiny Awaits	Paula Hendricks, Gina Pantely	11/26/12
Bibelot's Purple Heart O'Mine	Matt & Paula Abbott	9/12/11
Bibelot's Sugar Plum Dancer	Paula Hendricks	6/6/11
Bibelot's Witchful Thinking	Paula Hendricks, Janet Jamison	5/13/13
Bijone's Mon Cheri Music of the Nite	Susan Brockett, Barbara Shaffer Brian Lucas	1/4/12
Craigdale Chip Off The Rock	Cheryl Blair & Patricia Dale Hunter	2/28/13
Crème's Brandy Alexanderia	Carol Haines	5/3/12
Crème's Fool's Rush In	Carol Haines	5/3/12
Crème's Madam President	Carol Haines	5/3/12
Doriann's Saks Hollywood Bombshell	Michelle and Carol Konick	10/29/13
Doriann's Tennessee Gentleman Jack	Michelle and Carol Konick	10/29/13
Doriann's The Duke of Prelude	Michelle and Carol Knoick	10/29/13
Hollyhock She Returns	Debra Gibb, Linda Rowe	6/18/13
Jabree's Bellefleur La Jolie	Nita & Mark Gryan	12/19/11
Jabree's Jack of Hearts	Nita & Mark Gryan	3/23/11
Jasme Raggedy Ann	Mayno Blanding	11/29/09
Knollwood's Henry	Susan Anneser & Dean Anneser	3/11/13
Luvit's A Rolex Cellissima At Dalnavert	Linda Ross, Bernice & Brian Lucas	8/1/12
Luvit's a Rolex Daytona At Dalnavert	Linda Ross, Bernice & Brian Lucas	11/26/12
Luvit's A Rolex Yacht-master At Dalnavert	Bernice & Brian Lucas, Linda Ross,	11/7/12
Luvit's Dalnavert Double Destiny	Linda Ross, Bernice & Brian Lucas	1/11/13
Luvit's Dalnavert Olympic Omegamania	Jill SanFilippo, Linda Ross, Bernice & Marilyn Torrance	3/11/13
Merryell Absolutely Spellbound	Mayno Blanding	11/29/09
Merrymaker's Living Doll	Cindy Morey	11/15/09
Merrymaker's Southern Charm of Bibelot	Cindy Morey	1/13/11
Miabella Dancing Queen	Sheryl Kapella	6/3/13
Miabella Head Over Heels	Sheryl Kapella	6/3/13
Mybliss Expertly Engineered	Myra Wotton	7/26/12
Mybliss Dandy Devil Wears White	Myra Wotton, Jan & Alan Shetzer	1/5/12
Mybliss Galway's Irish Imp	Nancy Noonan	06/06/10
MyBliss Petite Coquette	Loretta McDonald	3/16/11
MyBliss Sport Edition At Bella	Stephanie Uva, Myra Wotton Nicole Shaffer	8/19/12
Paray Parasol of Knollwood	Susan & Dean Anneser	12/1/10
Paray's Secret Encounter	Susan & Dean Anneser	12/1/10
Saks Hamelot Little Drummer Boy	Sandra & Kieth Hanson	8/6/12
Saks Winning Card	Sandra & Kieth Hanson	8/6/12
She Bichons Elizabeth Taylor	Sharon E. Hunkins	2/15/14

She Bichons Sundance Kid	Sharon E. Hunkins & Dale Schwab	2/25/14
Victoire Diamond Rio Citrine	David & Darlene Scheiris	12/02/09
Victoire Juniper's Hot Tamale	Vickie Halstead	11/30/09
Victoire L'Amour Champagne Lace	Vickie Halstead	11/30/09
Victoire Melodie's Bleu Reign	Melodie Michel	11/30/09
Victoire Phantom's Devil in Disguise	Diana Bugos, Vickie Halstead	12/4/12
Victoire's Cheers to Austin	Vickie Halstead	11/30/09
Victorie Gerie No Lemon Gemstone	Vickie Halstead, Mary Wangsness	11/30/10
Victorie's Norwegian Red	Vickie Halstead	11/30/09
White Shadow Galaway Hide N'Seek	Nancy Noonan	6/06/10