



ZOETIS DIAGNOSTICS

GetWell

The Pruritic Patient

Diagnosing and managing pruritus in canines.

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Dermatological conditions are some of the leading causes for veterinary visits¹

Skin and ear problems account for a significant portion of daily caseloads in small-animal clinics.² In a recent study, among an average of 177 dogs examined per month, 30% will be presented and treated for pruritic conditions.³



Did you know?

Only 41% of pruritic cases in dogs get diagnostic testing⁴

Identifying common causes of pruritus

The table below presents the most common dermatologic conditions according to etiology. Knowing typical pruritic presentations helps narrow possibilities during initial examination, though individual cases may vary, and secondary infections can make itching worse.

Category	Common Cause
Ectoparasites	Fleas, sarcoptic mange (scabies), Demodex, ear mites, Cheyletiella, lice
Hypersensitivities	Environmental allergies (atopic dermatitis), food allergies/adverse food reactions, contact dermatitis, fleas (allergic dermatitis)
Secondary infections	Superficial bacterial pyoderma (<i>Staphylococcus pseudintermedius</i>), <i>Malassezia dermatitis</i>

When it comes to pruritus, early recognition and collaboration with pet owners are key.

Educating clients about dermatologic signs, the complexity of certain conditions, and the importance of at-home treatment compliance can help minimize additional complications and prevent the frustration that comes with delayed clinical improvement.

Asking the right questions

After collecting patient history (signalment, duration, previous treatments), a deeper dive into a patient's life and habits may be necessary. The basics can't be overlooked, but these targeted questions often reveal important clues.

- ✓ Does the pet have access to outdoor areas? What grows there?
- ✓ Are there seasonal patterns to the itching?
- ✓ What does the pet's diet include? (treats, table scraps, supplements)
- ✓ With whom does the pet live (humans and other animals), and do any household members present similar conditions?
- ✓ On what does the pet sleep? (bedding materials, rugs, furniture)
- ✓ What cleaning products, detergents, or air fresheners are used at the home?
- ✓ Has anything new been introduced to the household recently?
- ✓ What kinds of toiletries are used at the home? (shampoos, conditioners, sprays)
- ✓ Have there been any recent stressors or behavioral changes?

Diagnostics Guide

vetscan Imagyst® AI Dermatology

Vetscan Imagyst AI Dermatology provides rapid, accurate cytology results at the point of care, detecting yeast, bacteria, and inflammatory white blood cells. See the back of this guide for more information on dermatologic cytology.

1

Stop the Pruritus

Prescribe appropriate anti-pruritic and/or anti-inflammatory therapy based on severity and suspected cause.

2

Rule Out Parasites

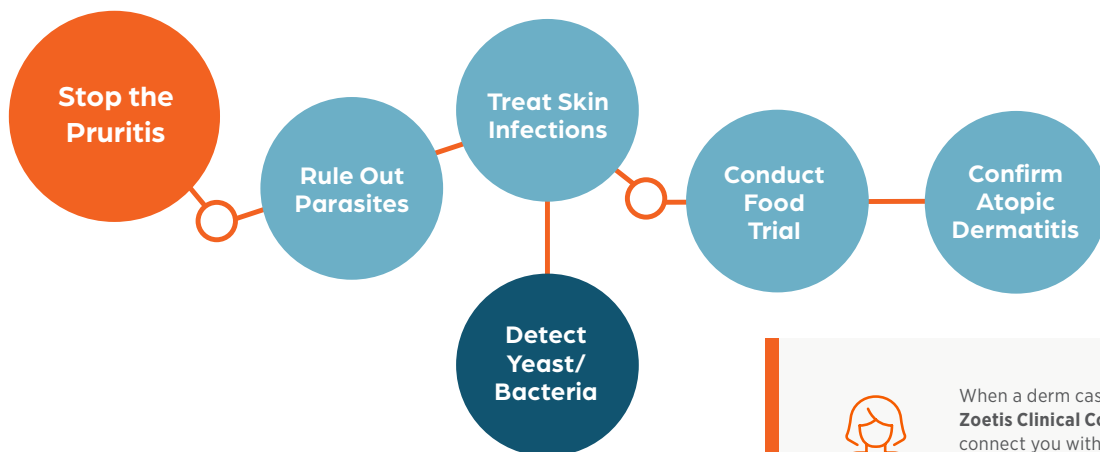
Parasitic infestations are among the most common causes of pruritus. Perform skin scrapings, hair plucks, flea combing, and/or empirical ectoparasitic treatment.

3

4

Treat Skin Infections If You Detect Yeast or Bacteria

Perform skin and/or ear cytology to identify bacteria and/or *Malassezia*. Treat appropriately with topical therapy.



When a derm case becomes complicated, **Zoetis Clinical Consultation Services** can connect you with dermatology specialists via telemedicine. Get expert guidance and support when you need it.

5

Conduct Food Trial

Implement a strict food-elimination trial with a novel protein or hydrolyzed diet for at least 8-12 weeks.

At-home compliance:

Even small amounts of other food or certain flavored medications can invalidate results. Clear communication with pet families is essential.

6

Confirm Atopic Dermatitis

If pruritus persists after ruling out parasites, infections, and food allergies, assess for systemic disease and comorbidities before diagnosing canine atopic dermatitis (CAD). Rule out any autoimmune conditions, endocrine disorders, neoplasia, and protozoal diseases.

If all other causes are excluded and the clinical presentation fits, environmental allergies are the likely cause. Consider assessing for environmental triggers and add allergen-specific immunotherapy if appropriate.

Cytology: Your go-to tool in dermatology

Dermatologic cytology is one of the most valuable diagnostic procedures your team can access in practice. It is minimally invasive, inexpensive, and provides critical information quickly, allowing treatment plans to be initiated faster.

Once cytology samples are collected, rapid and accurate evaluation guides treatment decisions. A tool like Zoetis' **Vetscan Imagyst AI Dermatology** enhances this process. Using powerful AI, it analyzes cytology slides at the point of care, detecting yeast, bacteria, and inflammatory cells, and distinguishes between cocci and rods.

When to use cytology	What to look for
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Any patient with skin lesions (pustules, papules, crusts, collarettes)✓ Cases with a greasy, malodorous skin or coat✓ Ear infections or inflammation✓ Suspected yeast or bacterial infections✓ Monitoring treatment response	<p>Acute inflammation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Neutrophils (bacterial infection, yeast infections, or non-infectious/sterile pyodermas)✓ Eosinophils (allergic/parasites)✓ Macrophages (chronic) <p>Infectious agents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cocci bacteria (most commonly <i>Staphylococcus pseudintermedius</i>)✓ Rod bacteria✓ <i>Malassezia</i> yeast



Need help interpreting results? If cytology findings are unclear or you're unsure about the next step, Zoetis offers Clinical Consultation Services to help you interpret diagnostic results and make the best available diagnostic and treatment decisions.

Quick guide: Sample collection

Collection technique	Best for	Method
Direct impression smear	Exudative lesions, pustules, moist dermatitis	Gently but firmly press slide directly onto lesion
Indirect impression smear	Ear canals, interdigital spaces	Roll swab in one direction onto slide



Explore additional resources for sick pet testing in your **GetWell toolbox**

References: 1. Miller J, Simpson A, Bloom P, et al. 2023 AAHA Management of Allergic Skin Diseases in Dogs and Cats Guidelines. J Am Anim Hosp Assoc. 2023;59: 1-30. 2. Lundberg A, Koch SN, Bierbrier L, Slater MR. Diagnosing common skin conditions of dogs and cats in community medical practice. Today's Vet Pract. 2022. 3. Data on File. Study: Impact of IMAGYST AI Diagnostic Tool on Current Cytology Testing Landscape, C-Space 2022, Zoetis Inc. 4. Zoetis Data on File. C-Space Results – US. August 2022.

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Individualized care starts with comprehensive diagnostic insights

Diagnosing pruritus in dogs requires determining the underlying condition while also treating secondary symptoms

Adapted from the 2023 AAHA Management of Allergic Skin Diseases in Dogs and Cats guidelines.

STEP 1

Obtain Clinical History and Perform General and Dermatologic Physical Exam

- ✓ Obtain a detailed history, including pruritus patterns, response to previous therapies and environment
- ✓ Complete a nose-to-tail physical exam, including flea combing and an otoscopic exam
- ✓ Pay attention to the interdigital spaces, the nail beds, as well as the areas around the anus and genitals

STEP 2

Complete a dermatologic minimum database

- ✓ Run skin and ear cytology (if ear disease is indicated)
Vetscan Imagyst® AI Dermatology
- ✓ Collect deep and superficial skin scrapings if indicated
- ✓ Rule out dermatophytes if indicated (i.e., woods lamp, hair plucks, DTM, culture or PCR)

STEP 3

Manage quality of life

- ✓ Reduce pruritus using glucocorticoids, other medications or topical therapy
- ✓ Treat secondary bacterial and Malassezia infections/overgrowths
- ✓ Treat otitis externa, if present
- ✓ Prescribe a flea & tick preventive to treat ectoparasites

STEP 4

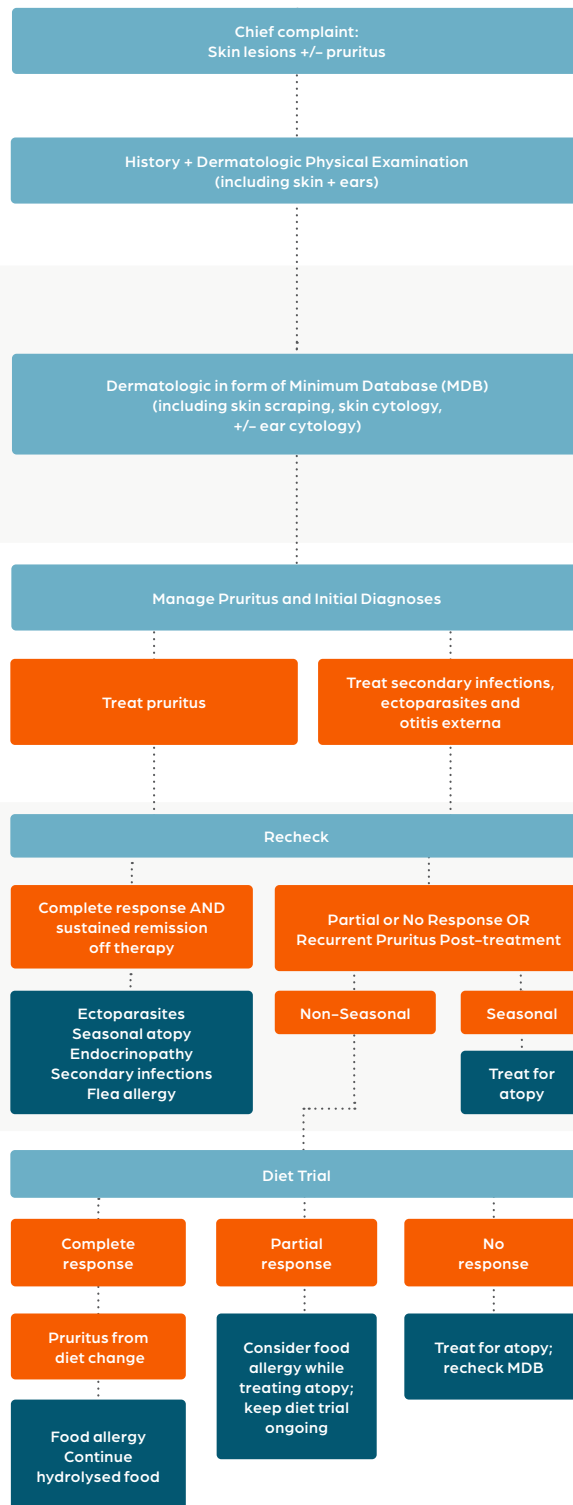
Recheck and assess response

- ✓ Assess response 14 days after treatment begins
- ✓ Discontinue medicines one at a time
- ✓ Next steps will depend on the level of response

STEP 5

Conduct a diet trial

- ✓ Conduct for 8–12 weeks using a hydrolyzed or a novel protein diet
- ✓ Control pruritus with glucocorticoids or other medications
- ✓ Reintroduce original diet to challenge the patient and confirm the allergy



Obtain a complimentary consultation with a board-certified dermatologist anytime[†] via Zoom or email for additional guidance and support.

[†]Dependent on consultant availability

