

I have an 8-year-old Pembroke Corgi. He has developed a hard, crusty substance under his chin. He often sleeps with his tongue hanging out and drools. I am curious about the cause and if there is something I can apply or do to relieve this.

It is common for a dog that has a tongue extending past the teeth to drool while sleeping or resting. It is possible that this saliva is causing a moist dermatitis, or irritation to the skin. The moistness can create the perfect environment for a bacterial or yeast infection, resulting in a crust. Topical medications may be enough to treat the skin. There are some occasions where the skin can be very inflamed and infected under the scab and oral medications may need to be given.

A visit with your veterinarian will allow her to do a thorough examination of the skin. She may locate other skin lesions that you do not see. Crusting of the skin is often associated with ongoing trauma and irritation to the skin, infections, or skin parasites. Your veterinarian may recommend a simple cytology to determine if there is an infection and a skin scraping to look for mange. A skin cytology involves a slide or piece of tape pressed against the abnormal areas of skin to collect a few cells. The slides are examined under the microscope for bacteria, yeast, mange mites or abnormal cells.

It is important to provide a thorough history to your veterinarian whenever discussing skin problems. What food you have been feeding is important as some pets develop food allergies that manifest as skin diseases. Exposure to other animals can help rule out skin mites, particularly scabies. If you or anyone else in your family has had recent lesions on their skin, your veterinarian needs to be made aware of this as ringworm may be on their differential list. Always discuss what medications your pet is on as well as any recent changes at home. It is important to let the doctor know if your pet is scratching himself and how severe the itch is.

Often allergies are the underlying cause of the skin problems we see in pets. In your dog's case he may be allergic to plastic food bowls, or vinyl toys. If it is determined that the drooling is the cause, periodontal disease may be resulting in high levels of bacteria in the saliva adding to the skin infection. A thorough dental cleaning and better home dental care will be needed to prevent the skin infection from returning after it is treated. You are doing the right thing by looking into the cause now before it gets worse.

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