

Acral Lick Granulomas

Acral Lick Granulomas, also known as Lick Granulomas, are a skin condition that can be seen in dogs. The name of this dermatological condition comes from where it is located on the body, acral meaning on the extremities and from the cause of the condition, licking. Acral Lick Granulomas form when a dog continuously licks at a certain area on their legs. Due to the dog continually licking at an area, a secondary bacterial infection typically occurs. Determining the cause can be hard because there can be several different reasons and there can be multiple issues occurring at the same time. Causes include:



- ✓ Boredom → Energetic dogs that are left on their own frequently or for long periods of time may turn their focus to licking at a certain area
- ✓ Foreign material → Having foreign material such as thistle, splinter or bee stinger in an area can cause the dog to continually lick at it to try to remove it
- ✓ Habitual behavior → the dog may continue licking at an area even after the initial cause has been resolved because it has become a habitual behavior
- ✓ Hypothyroidism → This has played a factor in some cases especially in black labs
- ✓ Itching → The dog may start licking at an area in an attempt to alleviate the itching due to conditions such as allergies
- ✓ Obsessive-compulsive disorders → This behavior shares some of the same features as obsessive-compulsive disorders in humans
- ✓ Pain → Dogs can start licking at an area that is painful in an attempt to decrease the pain
- ✓ Stress → Dogs that are in a stressful situation such as moving, a new addition to the family or the loss of a family member (either animal or person) can turn to licking



To diagnose Acral Lick Granulomas your veterinarian will first see a thickened area of skin that doesn't have any hair on it and is inflamed on one of the legs. They will also ask you about your dogs' licking behavior at home to help them come to a diagnosis. Your veterinarian may recommend doing a skin biopsy or other procedures to ensure that it is not similar appearing skin conditions that would be treated very differently. Determining why your dog has an Acral Lick Granuloma can be more difficult than diagnosis it.

Treatment of Acral Lick Granulomas can vary depending on the cause. Also, in some cases if you prevent the dog from licking on one leg they may start licking on another leg. In all cases your veterinarian will prescribe antibiotics to combat the secondary bacterial infection. It is possible that you dog would need to be on antibiotics long term (up to six months) to completely clear up the bacterial infection. There are several different ways to try and deter the dog from licking at the affected area, however it can take multiple tries to find the correct deterrent and even then the dog may just start licking on a different leg. Lick deterrents can include:

- ✓ topical creams to numb the skin
- ✓ bitter sprays that are applied to the area
- ✓ having your dog wear an Elizabethan collar
- ✓ bandaging the leg
- ✓ applying an electronic bandage that causes a tingling sensation when licked

Other treatments include:

- ✓ Anti-inflammatory medications if the cause of the licking is a painful joint
- ✓ Surgically removing the affected skin with a laser that will remove the affected tissue and seal off the nerve endings in that area (sometimes the dog will continue to lick at the surgical site because that can be irritating)
- ✓ Behavioral modifications that can include
 - Anti-anxiety drugs and/or sedatives
 - Allowing your dog more time to be actively playing or walking to tire them out
 - Avoiding the stimulus such as having them confined in crates or kennels
 - Getting a companion for them to interact with
 - Consulting a behavioral consultant for further evaluation and treatments



Acral Lick Granulomas can be frustrating because they are difficult to completely resolve; however they are normally manageable. Veterinarians will emphasize control and management as well as being diligent when noticing a new spot appearing. For more information on Acral Lick Granulomas please feel free to contact Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at either (920) 668-6212 or info@cgvet.com. You can also visit the following websites:

- ✓ <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=1541>
- ✓ http://www.petmd.com/dog/general-health/evr_dg_acral_lick_granuloma_a_dermatology_nightmare
- ✓ <http://www.skinvetclinic.com/acrallickdermatitis.html>
- ✓ <http://veterinarymedicine.dvm360.com/just-ask-expert-how-do-you-combat-acral-lick-dermatitis>