



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

What is miliary dermatitis?

Miliary dermatitis describes how the feline skin can react to a number of different diseases. At least twenty different causes of miliary dermatitis exist—mostly allergic, parasitic, or infectious conditions—so the best way to control the problem is to try to find the cause and treat appropriately. Basic diagnostic tests that your veterinarian will perform include a complete physical examination, multiple skin scrapings, ringworm culture, fecal examination, and flea combing to look for evidence of fleas. The most common cause of miliary dermatitis is flea bite hypersensitivity. Many cats with flea allergy do not have a heavy flea load, but it only takes a few bites to cause some cats to react. Strict flea control will make a big difference to these cats, but admittedly, reducing the flea population is a difficult task.

Cats that require some kind of cortisone to control their skin disease often respond to low doses given every other day, although many cats can tolerate higher doses without problems. Diabetes and immune system suppression are health concerns related to using cortisone treatment, however, at low doses they are uncommon side effects, even with long-term usage. Some reports indicate that over 50 percent of cats with an itchy skin disease respond favorably to a combination of fatty acid supplementation with an antihistamine, thus allowing a reduced dose of cortisone to control the problem. There is a delay in how quickly the fatty acid supplement takes effect; it may take several weeks or longer in some cats before any positive benefit is seen.

Sex and the Single Cat

Each year there are millions of homeless pets that are destroyed because they are never adopted. If current trends continue we can expect the cost in pet lives lost to euthanasia to spiral upward. However, there is a reasonable and responsible solution to the problem—birth control for cats. You, as a cat owner, are responsible for your cat's sexuality.

Female cats that will not be used specifically in a breeding program should be spayed. Spaying is the surgical removal of the reproductive organs (i.e., ovaries, uterus). The removal of these organs eliminates behaviors associated with an intact female during heat cycles, such as excessive vocalization, restlessness, treading, rolling and extreme affection. Spaying also reduces or eliminates the risk of reproductive diseases such as uterine infections, ovarian cysts and tumors, and mammary tumors.

Male cats should be neutered before they become sexually active, usually before six months. The testicles are removed surgically. Neutering also helps to reduce fighting, roaming, and territorial marking with urine that is associated with intact males.

The cost of spaying or neutering is considerably less than the cost of medical bills associated with reproductive diseases and sexually related behavior problems. Also, spaying and neutering pet cats reduces the problem of homeless kittens.

Why be concerned about gastrointestinal parasites?

Gastrointestinal parasitism is a common problem in cats, with prevalence rates as high as 45 percent. The parasites can be wormlike (e.g., stomach worms, roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms) or one-celled (e.g., *Isospora*, *Giardia*, *Toxoplasma*) organisms. The signs associated with parasite infections are fairly nonspecific, such as a dull haircoat, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, mucoid or bloody feces, loss of appetite, pale

mucous membranes, or a pot-bellied appearance. The vomiting, diarrhea, anemia, and dehydration caused by gastrointestinal parasites will weaken a cat, making it more susceptible to viral and bacterial infections and diseases; thus robbing your cat of good health. Furthermore, some parasites have the potential of infecting humans.

Diagnosis of gastrointestinal parasites is usually made by microscopic examination of a fecal sample. Your cat's yearly exam should include a fecal sample examination. If your cat is infected, your veterinarian will prescribe medication that will eliminate the parasite(s).

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