



## Happy 4th of July from Alvin Animal Clinic



### Greetings!

We hope you have an enjoyable start to your July with a good July 4th celebration! With the holiday in July, we thought it was a very appropriate time to discuss firework anxiety. Some of you may have noticed that your pets get anxious, upset, or even a little destructive when there are loud noises outside. Fireworks are defiantly a trigger for some animals to work up their anxiety. We can offer some solutions for those problems. First of all, it is advisable to give your pets a place where they feel safe during the fireworks whether that is a private area in your home, a kennel inside or out, or a dog house or structure they know is theirs. Second, we can provide a tranquilizer if you think your pets need it that will relax them enough to take the edge off. It helps to start the medication about 30 minutes before you think you will need it and it can last up to 4 hours at a time. Third, remember to keep things away from your pet that they may destroy during their anxiety such as stuffed toys or blankets. Anxiety is a common issue for many of our canine patients, so just let us know if we can help you this year. We want your furry family members to have an enjoyable holiday as well.

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We would also like to spend some time educating you about skin issues. For many of our pets, warm weather equals itching, skin infections, and ear infections. Diagnosing the underlying cause of an itch can be challenging. There are several different underlying conditions which all result in the same clinical signs: a miserably itchy pet. The best way to come to the correct diagnosis is to start by checking for topical parasites such as fleas, mites, and fungus. To do this, samples will be taken from the skin, ears, or hair as appropriate and examined by our well trained technicians. Common parasites of our pets' skin include: dermatophytes (ringworm;fungus), demodectic mange mites (red mange), fleas, and sarcoptic mange mites (scabies, sarcoptes). Of these, fleas, dermatophytes, and sarcoptic mange mites are all zoonotic - meaning that we humans can catch them too. In our May newsletter, we discussed flea control options. For more information on current flea control recommendations, please call and speak to one of our technicians.

If fleas are not determined to be the parasite causing your pet's skin condition, then we will investigate for other skin parasites. Dermatophytes (ringworm) cause itchy, flaky skin and hair loss on pets. There are several different species of dermatophytes which can infect the hair and skin of people and animals. The most common ones prefer to live on dead leaves and decaying soil outside. These fungi infect us and our pets when we handle leaves or soil. Sarcoptic mange mites (scabies) must be spread through contact. The mites can only live for about 3 days off of a host. They can be spread back and forth between people, dogs, cats, rabbits, and just about anything with hair or fur. The mites burrow under the skin to lay eggs and this causes very itchy small red bumps which may or may not form pustules (white heads;pimples). Demodex is a kind of mite that lives on the skin of most dogs but only affects those with some immune suppression. When your pet is affected by it, it is called demodectic mange. It is often seen in puppies whose immune system is not yet fully developed, in breeding females, or dogs that have undergone some stress and reacted with itchy skin. Veterinary studies also show that demodecticosis is inherited, and affected dogs should not be bred. It can be treated, but when your pet is diagnosed with it they may have bouts of it throughout their life. Demodex is not contagious. If no parasites were found, then systemic causes of itching are considered.

The most common systemic cause of itching in our pets is allergies. Pets can be allergic to anything that people can be allergic to, the difference being that people often have respiratory problems due to allergies while our pets have skin problems due to the same allergies. The signs of allergies in pets are exactly the same whether the allergen is a pollen, dust mite, or food. In pets with year round allergy symptoms, and in dogs under 2 years of age, we start our allergy investigation with a two month trial of prescription hypoallergenic food. In older dogs, dogs with seasonal allergies, or dogs that have already undergone a prescription food trial, we perform a blood test called a serum allergy test. By following this systematic approach, we are able to come to the true diagnosis of the underlying problem in the most efficient, most affordable way possible. Any prolonged itching or hair loss on your pet should really be checked out by our veterinarians.

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In closing, we would like to again say thank you to all of our wonderful clients out there. Without you, we would not be needed. We have seen many of you use the e-appointments setting on our website as another option for scheduling. Please check that out if you have not and give us some feedback on its usefulness. We want things to work for you, so we need to know if they are or not. And finally, those of you that have referred us to your friends and family we say a huge thank you. We know several of you bring us new clients almost weekly. When you are referring, please use our referral program. Take a referral card from our office, hand it to a friend and when they come see us not only do they get a \$10.00 credit applied to their account, but so do you. Thank you for helping us to better serve the Alvin community.

Sincerely,

Your Alvin Animal clinic team

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