**Hot Spots and Lick Granuloma Sores in Dogs**

Dogs can quickly chew sores on their skin. “[Hot spots](http://www.examiner.com/topic/hot-spots/articles)” are usually instigated by a flea bite, which makes the skin really itchy. The [dog](http://www.examiner.com/topic/dog) may be observed chewing intensely at a specific location, often near the hips, base of the tail, or flank, where fleas like to hang out. The hair will be chewed off and broken at variable lengths. The skin will turn red, moist and oozing. The best treatment is having a vet shave the area, cleaning it to reduce bacterial infections, and treating for itching. It is imperative to keep the dog’s mouth off the area to avoid further complications. Give a flea preventative or repellent that is safe for dogs.
[Lick granuloma](http://www.examiner.com/topic/lick-granuloma/articles) sores are another type of self-inflicted skin irritation on dogs. These lesions take more time to develop--generally weeks to months. Stress, pain, boredom, or anxieties are underlying culprits for this type of [dermatitis](http://www.examiner.com/topic/dermatitis). Often the lesions are crater shaped, with thickened edges around the perimeter from the long-term irritation. Once a [sore](http://www.examiner.com/topic/sore/articles) gets to this severity, there is a release of natural pain killers in the body, so there is biochemical incentive for the dog to continue this behavior.

Get to the bottom of the cause—have your dog evaluated for arthritis or orthopedic pain. If boredom or anxiety is present, make sure to provide additional mental and physical stimulation such as exercise or play time. Many toys exist to specifically challenge a dog’s brain. These toys often require patience and manipulation for the dog to receive randomly dispensed treats or kibble from them. Doggie day cares and dog walkers are plentiful in the Seattle area, so find one that suits your dog’s needs for additional exercise or play.

Acupuncture, herbs, nutrition, and supplements can also help address the underlying causes for these issues. Acupuncture soothes stress, anxiety, pain and inflammation by reducing cortisol (stress and inflammatory hormone). Acupuncture also increases the body’s natural pain relieving and relaxing hormones, called endorphins and serotonin. These natural solutions are safer than the standard vet protocol of chronic steroid medications and repeated antibiotic use.