

May Fly Dermatitis
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May fly dermatitis is actually caused by gnats, those tiny black swarming bugs that annoy us and our pets in early spring and summer; hence the common name “May fly”.

These pests usually attack the ears, around the eyes, and the bellies of dogs and, sometimes, cats. Most commonly we see bright red circular lesions on the belly. They start as red rings and then the redness fills in forming a circle. Usually the pets are not itchy and the lesion(s) will go away on their own with no treatment. Many owners think these red circles are either ringworm or a bulls-eye rash associated with Lyme disease. Ringworm in animals is rarely a ring – more often it occurs as patches of scaly hair loss, and animals do *not* develop the classic bulls-eye rash that does develop in humans bitten by Deer ticks carrying the Lyme organism. So, if you are seeing one or more bright red rings on your pet’s belly and it’s springtime, you’re probably dealing with May fly bites. They will go away on their own. There are other, sometimes more serious, conditions that can cause red rings on the skin, or your pet may even be allergic to gnat bites. Therefore if you notice that the lesion(s) become itchy, larger, scaly, have a discharge, or don’t go away, bring your pet to your veterinarian for an exam.

Two other locations commonly attacked by gnats are the ears and around the eyes. These areas will have tiny bumps, hair loss and sometimes swelling. Animals that develop these lesions will sometimes be itchy. Also, these areas can become infected and require treatment with oral antibiotics that your veterinarian will prescribe after an exam.

You can help your pet avoid these annoying pests by keeping them inside as much as possible. Alternatively, you can use most fly repellents that you use for yourself – just be careful to avoid their mouth and eyes when applying. We do have a gel at the Dunstable Animal Clinic made specifically for animals called Pet Guard Gel. It works fairly well and because it’s made for animals it is tolerated very well by them. It repels gnats, mosquitoes and other flies, and even contains sunscreen.