


JUNE 2012

petage

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR THE BUSY PET RETAILER OF TODAY ... AND TOMORROW

A Backer Publication



When Retail Channels Blur

Now that consumers can buy pet products nearly anywhere—and compare prices instantly—retailers must learn to compete without price-cutting. >> 46

Over-the-counter balms, salves and sprays containing natural and herbal ingredients can provide relief for vexing skin problems in dogs and cats.

By Melissa Hart

Herbal Skin Care Products for Pets

Dermatitis, allergic reactions, hot spots, clipper burns, bug bites, dry skin, cracked pads: Skin ailments like these are likely to make most furry pets miserable at some point in their lives.

When their owners come to you for help, you should be ready to offer safe and soothing healing solutions. Over-the-counter balms, salves and sprays containing natural and herbal ingredients are good options: They are safe, easy to apply and work fast to provide relief and promote healing.

Natural Itch Relievers

Itchy skin problems are among the most common—and vexing—complaints. Veterinarians often prescribe steroid medicines, but many holistically minded veterinarians and pet owners believe steroids are a last resort. Today, several companies are addressing less severe problems with natural and herbal products.

“I saw that most of the products on the skin market were a combination of antibiotics [and] steroids, and many of them had alcohol. If it’s got alcohol, it’s going to burn,” said Dr. Rose DiLeva, a classically trained veterinarian who also is certified in traditional Chinese medicine and herbology, acupuncture and chiropractic treatments.

She tinkered with the formula for a natural alternative for about a decade. In 2008, she started offering Dr. Rose’s Remedies Skin Treatment through her company, Dr. Rose’s Remedies (Chadds Ford, Pa.). The treatment—in balm and spray forms—contains calendula oil to heal wounds and hot spots quickly, plus tea tree oil to prevent infection. “From what I’ve observed clinically, it seems to heal wounds 30 percent faster than the conventional products,” DiLeva added.

In much the same way, Juliann Eskite, owner of Juno’s Garden (Pacifica, Calif.), drew on her background as an herbalist and her knowledge of medicinal plants to create Pal Dog products. For example, Boo-Boo Treatment Gel is an all-purpose first-aid gel with arnica and St. John’s wort to relieve pain, aloe vera to cool inflamed areas, and flower essence to induce calm.

A nongreasy mango nut butter base makes Pal Dog Soothing Balm especially

good for senior dogs, Eskite said. She explained that skin loses elasticity with age, making older dogs susceptible to autoimmune issues and hot spots.

Natural ingredients also can address yeast infections, which are easy to overlook as the cause of itchy skin cases, according to Dr. Adelia Ritchie, an organic chemist with 40 years' experience in the pet industry and founder of Dermagic Skin Care for Animals Inc. (Seattle).

Ritchie kept this in mind when creating Dermagic Certified Organic Shampoo Bars and related products. They are formulated to maintain a proper pH balance, which prevents dry skin and strengthens the pet's natural defenses.

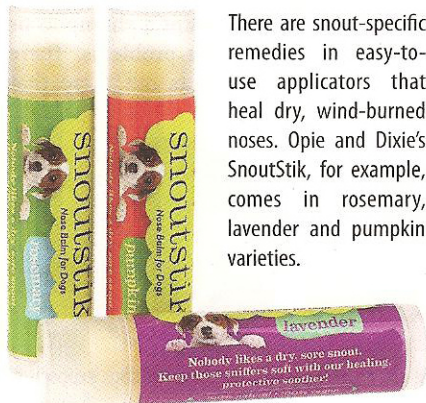
Consumer demand for natural skin remedies is up, says DiLeva, who still operates her veterinary practice. "Fortunately, the holistic vet world is expanding, due to people requesting it. They want options; they don't want antibiotics and steroids," she said.

Moisturizing Balms and Salves

Dogs' pads can dry out or even crack as a result of walking on salted winter sidewalks, hot summer pavement or rugged terrains. Balms and salves restore moisture, soothe itchiness, promote healing and protect against further damage. Most use a beeswax base, which keeps the product solid and stable.

The trailblazer in this product category is Bag Balm from Dairy Association Co., (Lyndonville, Vt.). Debuting in 1899, it was developed to soothe dairy cows' chapped and sore udders. Over time, dairy farmers realized it soothed their chapped, sore hands. Eventually, people realized it worked on pets, too. Now Bag

There are snout-specific remedies in easy-to-use applicators that heal dry, wind-burned noses. Opie and Dixie's SnoutStik, for example, comes in rosemary, lavender and pumpkin varieties.



OPIE & DIXIE LLC

Inside the Jar

A HOST OF natural ingredients can be found in healing products, imparting a wide range of benefits.

Ingredient	Properties and Benefits
Aloe vera gel	Anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic. Moisturizes and soothes irritated skin. Promotes healing. Should not be applied to open wounds.
Arnica	Anti-inflammatory. Relieves pain.
Beeswax	Emulsifier that helps balms and salves stay stable. Emollient. Forms a protective layer on skin and pads.
Calendula	Anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory.
Candelilla wax	A plant-derived vegan alternative to beeswax.
Cocoa butter	Antioxidant. Emollient.
Colloidal oatmeal	Anti-inflammatory. Reduces itching.
Comfrey	Anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory and astringent. Relieves pain. Should not be used on broken skin.
Eucalyptus	Anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory. Relieves pain.
Flower essences	Have calming and other therapeutic effects.
Frankincense	Traditionally used to heal wounds, reduce swelling and relieve pain.
Jobaba oil	Emollient. Prevents moisture loss.
Lavender	Has calming effect. Relieves pain. Promotes healing.
Mango seed butter	Antioxidant. Moisturizes skin and improves skin elasticity. Valued for its fast penetration rate.
Peppermint	Soothes irritated skin and relieves itching.
Rosemary	Anti-bacterial and anti-fungal. Traditionally used to relieve pain, moisturize dry skin and stimulate hair growth.
Shea butter	Anti-inflammatory. Moisturizer. Promotes healing.
St. John's wort	Anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and anti-viral. Relieves pain. Promotes healing.
Sunflower oil	Moisturizing barrier oil. Rich in vitamin E. Valued for its fast absorption rate.
Sweet almond oil	Emollient. Soothes dry, irritated skin.
Tea tree oil	Anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-viral and antiseptic. Should be used with caution on cats; inappropriate high doses have been associated with toxicity due to ingestion during grooming.
Vitamin E	Antioxidant. Helps skin retain moisture.
Witch hazel	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and astringent. Soothes irritated skin.

Sources: University of Maryland Medical Center's Complementary and Alternative Medicine Guide; Naturalherbsguide.com; Drugs.com; Wikipedia.com; and manufacturers.



Healing balms, salves, creams, sprays and gels help relieve skin discomfort, prevent infection and promote healing. Look for ingredients with anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-fungal and antiseptic properties.

Balm is sold in pet stores as well as drug stores and farm and feed stores.

The formula has changed little in 113 years, said office manager Shawna Wilkerson. One of its main ingredients is lanolin, which gives a layer of protection on dogs' paws. "It's greasy," Wilkerson admits, "but it really helps with the salt in the winter."

Another option is Joshua Tree Pet Salve from Tazlab L.L.C. (Bend, Ore.). Developed for rock climbers, it is well-suited for dogs that walk rough terrain, rocky rivers or hot sandy beaches, said owner Rick Fredland.

A product developed specifically for dogs is Cain & Able Paw Rub from EcoWellDog (Austin, Texas). It contains



two essential oils: peppermint oil, with a high menthol content, to soothe and relieve itching; and tea tree oil, valued for its antiseptic qualities. (See "Inside the Jar" for an overview of common natural and herbal ingredients.)

Products That Take a Licking

When products are intended to solve problems associated with excessive licking, it's important that they discourage additional licking so they actually have the chance to work.

Furry Friends Skin Soothing Salve from Emily Skin Soothers (Ipswich, Mass.) contains only six gentle ingredients—all safe to ingest. Perhaps more important, the unscented salve doesn't tempt the dog to lick it off, said company owner Michael Arsenault.

The core ingredients of Healing Paw Balm and SnoutStik from Opie & Dixie L.L.C. (San Francisco)—natural shea butter, sweet almond oil and jojoba seed or olive oil—are similarly safe. "Pet owners can feel secure in knowing

that these products are safe for their pets to ingest," said Deb Guardian, the company's owner.

Guardian backs up her claim with a taste test. "If you were to lick it, which I have, you will find that all the ingredients are safe for humans and dogs. And it's not all that tasty," she added.

Esprey Animal Products Inc. (Grapevine, Texas) goes a step further to ensure pets won't lick off its Paw Balm: They add a small amount of Bitrex, a harmless bitter substance used by people to discourage nail biting, said Justin Jones, the company's president.

Offer Complete Solutions

Because this is an emerging category, few of your customers will be familiar with these products. Take an approach they will appreciate: Offer them solutions to problems, and don't just sell them a product, Jones suggested.

That's why Espree added a "Pet Health Advisor" section, organized by common ailments, when redesigning its website. You could do something similar by offering fact sheets about skin ailments or by providing other resources. This establishes you as the go-to source for resolving skin issues.

"Make sure that you have a good understanding of what the product does. Consumers many times will state the problem or issue that they are having, but are unsure about what to use. You want to be able to have an immediate answer and not have to look through the store to see what you may or may not have," said Shannon Stamper, customer service and product team manager at ProbioticSmart.com (Menomonie, Wis.). Her company manufactures PSCPets Paw Balm and sells related products.

"One thing that I've noticed over the years is that people want a shampoo or spray to solve all their problems. There are a gazillion products out there that



Complementary product kits represent a holistic approach. Dermagic's Skin Rescue Essentials Kit, for example, contains a Certified Organic Peppermint & Tea Tree Oil Shampoo Bar, Skin Rescue Lotion and Hot Spot Salve.



Balms made specifically to condition, moisturize and heal dry or cracked pads are ideal for dogs exposed to extreme climates or rugged terrains.

A Sore Subject

VETERINARIANS SEE MORE than their fair share of pets with serious skin-related problems—as borne out by pet insurance claims. Here are figures representing the number of insured pets that received veterinary treatment for skin conditions in 2009.

Dogs

Atopic dermatitis	16%
Pyoderma and/or hot spot	10%

Cats

Atopic or allergic dermatitis	3%
Pyoderma and/or hot spot	1%

Source: Veterinary Pet Insurance Co.

make those claims and they don't work half the time, and often contain many chemicals, which is no good either," Ritchie added.

However, it may take more than one product to resolve chronic skin problems, such as allergies. For example, a shampoo alone may not fix the problem—but a gentle shampoo and a soothing balm or spray may speed recovery, said Ritchie.

Examples of this multiproduct approach include Dermagic System kits, which include peppermint and tea tree shampoo or shampoo bars, Skin Rescue Lotion, Hot Spot Salve; and the Soothing Care System Set from Juno's Garden, which contains Calming Lavender Shampoo & Massage Bath, Lavender & Aloe Conditioner & Cream Rinse and Soothing Spot Spray.

"The idea is to solve the problem at home first before taking the dog to the vet. This saves both time and money, both of which people have less and less of in this economy," said Lorna Paxton, president of EcoWellDog.

Don't be afraid to jump in and give these products a try yourself—literally. "We see that [when] a store sells a lot of a certain product, the reason is always because the sales staff believes in the product and as a result recommends it to customers," said Paxton. ■

Melissa Hart is a freelance writer living in New York's Adirondack region.

www.petage.com

In Print. In Person. Online.

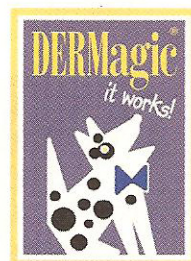
DERMAGIC Stops Yeast in its Tracks!

Licking Feet? Itchy, dry skin? Dandruff?
Hair loss? Black Skin? Use DERMAGIC Skin
Rescue Lotion and Skin Rescue Shampoo
Bar to restore healthy skin and coat.

Exclusively for Pet Age Readers
Spend \$50, get a 15% discount

Good until 8/31/2012
Use coupon code PA0812

DERMAGIC works!
Guaranteed.



See our entire line of products at:
www.dermagic.com
info@dermagic.com

ALL NATURAL SKIN CARE
FOR ANIMALS