

## SKIN DISEASES IN DOGS AND CATS

G.K. Dhaliwal, Noor Soeraya Norsham and Kalthum Hashim

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Serdang, Selangor,  
Malaysia

**Keywords:** skin, cats, dog, dermatohistopathology, dermatology.

### Introduction

A relatively large number of cases presented to the small animal practice comprise skin problems. This may be related to the warm, humid climate of the tropics which supports growth and proliferation of numerous skin pathogens, may it be parasites, fungal or bacteria. There is however, a paucity of information on the prevalence of skin diseases in cats and dogs and the causes of these problems. This study was undertaken to investigate the prevalence of skin disease and identify their causes in cats and dogs presented at UVH-UPM. The second objective was to evaluate the diagnostic method utilised, to report on the treatment carried out and the success of treatment against the common pathogens identified. The third major objective was to study the histopathology of normal skin and of diseased skin before and after treatment. The information obtained from this study would be useful in firstly, identifying the common causes of skin diseases in cats and dogs, improving the diagnostic skills and methods, particularly aspects of dermato-histopathology, and assessing the different treatment modalities for these skin problems.

### Materials and Methods

Retrospective and prospective studies of previous cases and ongoing cases presented at the UVH-UPM are being carried

out. A database has been created from information extracted from past records and current cases, via questionnaires, physical examinations and use of various diagnostic tests, including histology to investigate the frequent causes, type of treatment and duration and success. To study the histology of normal skin, biopsies were obtained from eight dogs and eight cats with healthy skin. Four types of fixatives and two types of stains were evaluated to determine the optimal preparation and staining for dermatohistology.

### Results and Discussion

Skin disease of dogs and cats represented 16.1% and 10.4% of the total number of canine and feline cases presented at UVH-UPM, respectively, during a period of one year. In another preliminary study conducted, bacteria was the most frequent cause of skin diseases in dogs, followed by dermatophytosis, cutaneous myiasis, contact dermatoses and demodectic mange. Skin diseases associated with endocrine disorders and allergy (atopy) were not diagnosed suggesting that these conditions are of lesser importance in Malaysia. In 72 cases in cats the most frequent cause of skin disease was associated with parasitic infestation, the most common being *Notoedres cati* (33.3%), followed by flea infestation (27.7%), *Otodectes cyanotis* (12.5%) and lice (11.1%). Dermatophytosis (12.5%) is another frequent cause of skin disease in cats, which is clinically presented as alopecia. The other less frequent skin diseases presented included, Sporotrichosis, pododermatitis and pyoderma. It was noted that 67% of the cats diagnosed with the problem of Notoedric mange were less than 6 months of age. The fixative and stain that were most favourable for examination of histological sections of skin were Karnovsky's and modified Giemsa, respectively.

### Conclusions

Bacteria and parasites and fungi are the major causes of skin diseases in cats and dogs in Malaysia.