

Autoimmune Skin Disease

Autoimmune Disorders

Discoid lupus erythematosus

Discoid lupus erythematosus (DLE) is a common immune mediated skin disease of dogs and rarely of cats. The underlying cause that triggers the immune system to react in such a way is unknown; however, sun exposure and a sensitivity to ultraviolet light may irritate the condition. The skin lesions are primarily localized to the nose but may appear on the face and limbs. Initially loss of pigment is noted followed by redness, ulcers and crusts. A secondary skin infection is common with the skin lesions observed with DLE.

A diagnosis of DLE is confirmed by obtaining skin biopsy samples from the affected areas. Subtle changes are noted within the skin biopsy samples and the review of the samples should be performed by a dermatohistopathologist to obtain the correct diagnosis. As secondary skin infections are common with DLE, any skin infection should be resolved prior to performing the skin biopsies.

DLE is a life-long disease and can be managed with a variety of medications and supplements. Since the disease is considered to be localized to the skin, topical therapy may be sufficient to control the disease. However with more severe disease systemic medication may be warranted that can modulate the immune system. Suppression of the immune system is typically not needed in cases of DLE.