



Miliary Dermatitis Eosinophilic Granuloma Complex

Miliary Dermatitis (MD) and Eosinophilic Granuloma Complex (EGC) are fancy sounding words to describe 2 of the most common feline skin diseases. They will be discussed together as their causes; treatment and prognosis are quite similar.

Causes:

- Allergies - hypersensitivity to fleas, biting insects, diet, inhaled and contacted substances such as molds, pollen, and dust.
- Parasites - fleas are the main culprit, but other external and internal parasites should be ruled-out.
- Infections - Bacterial and fungal infections
- Immune-mediated - The body launches an attack on its own skin. The causes for this are usually unknown.
- Genetics - Heredity does seem to play a role in the development of these diseases. Therefore, affected animals should not be used for breeding.
- Stress - While nearly impossible to verify, we do see more MD and EGC in cats that are very anxious animals, those having a significant life change at home (e.g. a new puppy or kitten, moving) or those who have another medical problem creating stress in their lives. Keep in mind, what we view as stress and what our cats view as stress can be very different.

Description of lesions

The lesions of Miliary Dermatitis are named as such because of their resemblance to millet seed. They appear as multiple, small crusts or scabs. The cats have usually over-groomed the area resulting in hair loss. The most frequently affected areas of a cat's body are the top line, base of tail, belly and around the neck.

The lesions of Eosinophilic Granuloma Complex are more diverse. They can be broad, flat ulcerated area, circular ulcers or line of crusts. They can also affect the mouth or anal areas.

Diagnosis

MD and EGC are not really a diagnosis, but rather a description of the problem. The actual diagnosis would be, for example, Flea Hypersensitivity or Food Allergy or . . . Steps taken to identify the cause can include physical examination, skin scrapings, fungal cultures, diet trials, blood chemistry and CBC, or allergy testing. All affected cats should be tested for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. Each case is different.

Treatment

The treatment for MD and EGC usually involves several things. First and foremost, flea control. Even if fleas are not seen on the cat, they should be treated with an appropriate medication to kill fleas. Your veterinarian will make a recommendation for your cat.

Second, most cats receive steroids to calm the inflammation and make them more comfortable. The type of steroid will depend on the cat, the owner and the severity of the lesions.

Third, many cats benefit from short-term antibiotic therapy.

Additional things that may be done are skin diet changes, antihistamine medication, desensitization and home management changes.

Prognosis

These skin diseases are not considered life threatening. They do, however, require on-going treatment at times of flare-up.