

A Facebook poster asked if discoid lupus erythematosus is common to the Kooiker.
Here is the skinny on this skin disorder.



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The NOSE Knows

Localized Discoid Lupus Erythematosus

By Nancy P. Melone, PhD

Discoid lupus erythematosus (DLE), also known as cutaneous lupus erythematosus, is an autoimmune disorder that is confined to the skin. Discoid lupus erythematosus (DLE) is the most common type of cutaneous (skin) lupus in canines.

There are two *other* forms of lupus that affect the skin in the dog: vesicular cutaneous lupus erythematosus and exfoliative cutaneous lupus, both of which are relatively rare in dogs. Given confinement of DLE to the skin, it is substantially more benign than other forms of lupus.

When people use the term “lupus,” in general conversation they are typically referring to systemic lupus, or “SLE”. While dogs can suffer

from SLE, DLE does not progress to become SLE. DLE is typically confined exclusively to the leather of the nose and face.

DLE has no known cause, but it is thought to have environmental (e.g., UV exposure), immunological (e.g., allergic reaction to sunlight), and possible hereditary components. As a precautionary measure, dogs who have DLE should not be bred.

Dogs with DLE develop crusting and scabbing of the skin usually starting around the nose. They may also suffer from hair loss. Black noses may turn lighter, even pink. Most canine DLE cases are exacerbated or possibly induced by UV light exposure and thus more severe during the

summertime or in sunny regions of the world. Cigarette smoke has also been implicated. Lesions are usually localized to the face. It should be noted that DLE is easily confused with other types of dermatitis, so a biopsy is generally required to make a definitive DLE diagnosis.

Stephanie Berger, DVM, at Point Breeze Veterinary Clinic in Pittsburgh, PA, says she always requires at least a punch biopsy with full thickness and crust and will often send it out to a pathologist who specializes in dermatopathology. Typically, the biopsy requires injectable or general anesthesia.

Collie, Shetland sheepdog, German shepherd, Brittany Spaniel, Chow Chow, and Siberian huskies appear to be predisposed to DLE. Nederlandse Kooikerhondje are not predisposed to DLE any more than any other breed or mixed breed dog.

Often treatment of DLE is effectively controlled without use of potent immunosuppression. Other cases require

immunosuppressives at some point to get DLE under control, but most do not stay on them long term.

Avoiding direct sun light is important. The usefulness of sunscreens can be reduced because most dogs will lick them off. A *serious issue* for dog owners is that many human sunscreens contain zinc oxide which is highly toxic to dogs if they lick it.

For an FDA pet-approved sun protector endorsed by the Food and Drug Administration and endorsed by the American Animal Hospital Association and the SPCA, visit: <https://epi-pet.com/>. Other sun-shielding products of interest include nose shields and UV light filtering sunvisors: <http://www.dognoseprotectors.com/> <https://protectivepetsolutions.com/collections/dog-line/products/optivizor-long-snout-clear-uv-tint>

In severe DLE cases, veterinarians may prescribe a course of oral glucocorticoids which can help to bring the disease under control. In

research studies, nicotinamide-tetracycline combination is reported effective in 50 to 70% of cases but the response is slow (2 months). Topical application of glucocorticoid (mometasone, betamethasone) and topical 0.1% tacrolimus are useful adjunctive therapies. In some cases, other medications may be discontinued. Treatment is often lifelong, but there is a *good prognosis* for long-term remission.

Sometimes people also use oral vitamin E or omega 3 and omega-6 fatty acids. These nutritional supplements are generally inadequate as a sole therapy for DLE but may reduce the need for other medications later. It takes 1-2 months for these supplements to show their effect. Vitamin E is fat soluble. This means that there is a risk of overdose. Consult your veterinarian if you contemplate the use of supplements. Often these supplements are contained in your dog's food, so check the nutritional content of the food you use to avoid overdose.

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