

Pets Suffering from Fly Strike

End the itch with natural remedies

By Vatsala Sperling, MS, PhD, PDHom, CCH, RSHom(NA)



Over the past 16 years, I've spent time in Costa Rica supporting the Hacienda Rio Cote' reforestation program.¹ Along the way, I've met "Sons-of-the-soil," Costa Rican people who deeply understand the land and region. They are farmers who raise crops and livestock to sustain their families, caring for their animals and plants using invaluable traditional knowledge. Their expertise came in handy for my dog, Manchas.

An intolerable itch

Manchas, a normally peaceful and well-behaved dog, suddenly started scratching at a hard-to-reach spot about six inches above her tail. She growled and bared her teeth while rolling on the ground. Eventually, her efforts to relieve the constant itch left her with ripped, bloody, and bare skin. I had never seen a dog in such misery.

Sage advice from a neighbor

I asked my neighbor Wilson, a "Son of the soil", for help. He examined a muzzled Manchas and said, "Moscardon (botfly)!"² Manchas had a botfly infestation, commonly called fly strike. Wilson explained that botflies lay eggs on mammals, and the larvae hatch and burrow deep into the skin. The spot itches terribly, driving the animal to scratch wildly and create wounds with tiny openings through which the larvae breathe.

Wilson squeezed Manchas' skin and removed as many larvae as possible but was unsure he got them all. Botfly larvae do not cause disease, but the wounds from Manchas' scratching were at risk of

getting infected. Wilson applied a purple solution to the spots, an approach that he said had always helped his farm animals. I figured it was gentian violet, an antiseptic purplish dye often used for fungal infections, but I had no idea. Wilson suggested visiting the vet because of the long and tormenting healing process after a botfly infestation.

Trying homeopathy first

Before taking Manchas to the vet, I investigated the homeopathy treatment route. Veterinary homeopathy is a well-known branch of homeopathy, and the remedies, old and new, are successfully used for pets, farm animals, and even animals raised in captivity.^{3,4,5} Animals respond to homeopathic remedies at the body, mind, and spirit levels, just as homeopathy's founder, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, envisioned for humans over 200 years ago.

I contacted U.S. veterinarian Wendy Jensen, DVM, CVH, and described my dog's plight. Wendy shared her experience with fly infestations and provided a list of potentially helpful remedies. *Silicea*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercurius corrosivus* topped the list of fly infestation remedies. Next, I researched to find remedies used by homeopaths in sub-tropical climates with endemic botfly infestation. One study⁶ showed success using *Sulphur* and *Pyrogenium* ointments. I kept searching for better options because the ointments were unavailable in rural Costa Rica, and thick salves can sometimes block air flow and delay wound healing. Also, Manchas was still scratching and biting herself and would probably have ingested the topical medication.

A second study⁷ reported benefits from *Sulphur* 12c, *Pyrogenium* 12c, and a remedy made from screw worm fly larvae (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*). The remedy from fly larvae was unavailable locally, and I did not know which of the 150 fly species had caused the infestation in Manchas.

Two remedy choices

Dr. Jensen and both research sources recommended *Sulphur* for larvae infestation, which is strong evidence for choosing this remedy along with *Sulphur's* proven ability to soothe itching. Though Manchas did not have a fever or other signs of infection that would indicate *Pyrogenium*, her spots oozed blood and were sticky and dirty looking with open wounds. This presentation guided me to *Psorinum* 30c, a remedy known for extreme itching that drives the animal (or person) to scratch until their skin bleeds. So, I added a few pellets of *Sulphur* 12c and *Psorinum* 30c to a one-ounce dropper bottle and gave Manchas a few drops twice daily. (See *Fly Strike Remedies* on page 37 for more remedy options.)

Sweet relief for Manchas

After two doses of the remedy mixture, Manchas calmed down and stopped growling and scratching. Within two days, her wounds began healing and eventually sealed up. A few bumpy spots persisted, and I wondered if these contained remnants of hatching larvae. But the rough spots vanished in a few more days, and healthy fur grew back. I gave Manchas the remedy mixture for one week until her symptoms improved.

Fly Strike Remedies

When your pet has fly strike, clean the wounds with saline solution and apply *Calendula* lotion, aloe vera gel, or diluted tea tree oil. (Mix five to 10 drops of tea tree oil in two ounces of water.) Try these remedies:

Arnica – pain associated with infestation

Caladium seguinum – faster healing and helps animal to resist fly bites

Mercurius corrosivus – itchy, smelly, ulcer-like wounds that ooze blood and pus; raw sores; animal is restless and uncomfortable, especially at night

Psorinum – itchy, dirty-looking wounds that ooze blood; animal scratches until skin bleeds

Silicea – itchy wounds; animal is chilly and anxious

Sulphur – tremendous itching worse from heat, becoming warm in the pet bed, and from bathing; animal is irritable and scratches constantly



High five to homeopathy

When a homeopathic remedy helps, I say, “High five to homeopathy!” But it wasn’t just homeopathy that helped Manchas. Wilson’s firsthand and generational experience with botfly infestations alerted me to a possibly drawn-out healing process. His assessment awakened the homeopath in me to find a remedy to cut my pet’s misery short. Individual

knowledge can be limited, so I contacted a colleague and consulted the research. I am grateful for all who helped me to fine-tune my observations and select remedies to restore Manchas’s health and further demonstrate the healing power of homeopathy.

References

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