

## Dog Licking Toes? Look for Yeast Infection

**Rust color on toes indicates infection in Miniature Schnauzer.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. I have a Miniature Schnauzer, and she loves to chew on her feet. They have even turned a rust color. We have no chemicals in the yard, so I don't know what makes her chew on them. I wash them frequently. What can I use to stop her from chewing on them? I think it's become a habit and not necessarily an itchy problem. She has no sores, the pads look healthy.

A. It appears that many dogs like to spend their time chewing at their feet, based on the number of questions I get about the topic. No doubt this could be due to boredom, compulsion, neurosis, or other behavioral causes, but in many dogs there is an underlying medical problem.

Based on the rust color you describe, I would be suspicious of a yeast infection between your dog's toes. This can only be diagnosed through your veterinarian, who will take a swab, rub it between your Schnauzer's toes, and put it on a slide. After the slide is stained, it is viewed on a microscope, and the budding yeast have a characteristic "clothespin" appearance.

The treatment for a yeast infection usually consists of a combination of an oral anti-fungal drug (yeast is a form of fungus), a topical ointment, and possibly an occasional foot bath in a medicated solution. In mild cases, often a topical cream is the only treatment needed. Your dog would need to wear a protective collar for a week so she could not lick the medication off. (As I have mentioned before, there are now soft Elizabethan collars that are much more comfortable for dogs and owners alike). Even if you don't medicate between the toes, using an E-collar for a week may allow the irritation and inflammation between the toes to subside on its own.