Those strange words Dermatologists use - Little dictionary

**Actinic disease**: disease caused or worsened by sunlight.

**Allergy, Allergen**: see dedicated factsheet.

**Alopecia**: lack or loss of hair. It can be localized or widespread; focal (a single patch) or multifocal; spontaneous (hair falls for the disease) or self-induced (coat is damaged by external trauma such as scratching).

**Autoimmune disease**: those in which the immune system rather than destroy external pathogens, is directed towards some normal component of the skin.

**Biopsy**: removal of a small sample of skin to perform a histological examination (but also cultures, PCR etc.).

**Bulla**: see vesicle, but larger.

**Cultural examination**: eg. bacteriological, mycological. A sample of hair or skin or other material is placed on a culture medium in order to isolate the pathogen.

**Cyst**: nodular lesion with an internal cavity lined with epithelium.

**Comedone**: so-called "blackhead". Hair follicle dilated and obstructed by a plug of keratin and sebum.

**Cytology**: through various techniques (swab, needle aspiration etc.) cells are taken from the affected skin. After being arranged on a slide and stained, they can be examined quickly with the microscope. Compared to histological examination is less precise but faster and easier to run.

**Depigmentation**: skin lighter in colour (white, gray) than normal.

**Dermatitis**: general term indicating inflammation of the skin. As such it is not a diagnosis.

**Dermatoses**: general term indicating a non-inflammatory disease of the skin.

**Dips**: topical application of a drug diluted in water. Generally they are not to rinse.

**Follicular casts**: scales surrounding a tuft of hair. They are a sign of disease affecting the hair follicle.

**Follicular dysplasia**: congenital condition of hair follicles that are malformed.

**Ectoparasites**: parasites living on/in the skin (eg. fleas, mites, ticks etc.).

**Endocrine diseases**: involving the endocrine glands, that is those producing hormones.

**Eosinophilic diseases**: eosinophils are white blood cells involved especially in parasitic and allergic diseases. Frequent in cats.

**Epidermal collarette**: residue of a hollow lesion (pustule, vesicle), after the top broke. It consists of an alopecic center and a squamous rim.

**Erythema**: redness of the skin. If you press with the finger it becomes pale.

**Excoriation**: superficial injury, often linear, due to trauma or self-trauma (scratching).

**Exudate**: pathological liquid, more or less dense, contained in a lesion or body cavity (eg. pus).

**Fistula**: opening to the outside of a nodule or plaque from which a pathological liquid is going out (eg. pus).

**Folliculitis**: inflammation of the hair follicles, the structures in which the hairs grow. The three most common causes are bacteria, Demodex mites and dermatophytes (fungi).
**Granuloma**: inflammatory lesion by which the body tries to isolate, to encapsulate a pathogen (eg. bacteria, fungi, foreign bodies).

**Hyperkeratosis**: thickening of the horny layer of the skin.

**Hyperpigmentation**: skin darker in colour (black, brown, bluish) than normal.

**Hypersensitivity**: synonymous with allergy.

**Hypertrichosis**: excessive growth of hair.

**Hypotrichosis**: hair reduction, in number or in length.

**Lichenification**: typical chronic lesion. On the thickened skin, it's possible to see clearly the skin typical tracks.

**Macula**: flat area of skin with lighter or darker color.

**Nodule**: solid lesion, more or less circumscribed, with size greater than 1 cm. It can be intradermal or subcutaneous.

**Papule**: small raised skin lesion, often reddish. It tends to evolve towards other lesions (pustule, plaque).

**PCR**: Polymerase chain reaction. Molecular diagnostic technique capable of detecting small amounts of DNA or RNA of a pathogen (bacteria, viruses, etc.) in an organic sample.

**Plaque**: circumscribed area of thickened, raised skin.

**Prophylaxis**: a synonym for prevention.

**Pustule**: small raised skin lesion, usually with yellowish apex, containing pus. In dogs and cats pustules break soon.

**Scaling**: detachment from the most superficial part of the skin of lamellae (scales, dandruff), generally whitish. If excessive, it is abnormal.

**Scar**: hairless area, usually whitish, shiny, residual of lesions that affected permanently the skin replacing it with fibrous tissue.

**Seborrhea**: a little ‘vague’ term used to describe any situation characterized by excessive flaking or greasiness of the skin.

**Self-limiting disease**: that heals on its own.

**Sensitivity testing**: after isolating the pathogenic bacterium in a culture, various antibiotics are tested to understand which one works and which not.

**Serological examinations**: tests carried out on blood serum to diagnose infectious diseases.

**Skin components**: the skin is constituted, starting from the outside, from the epidermis (formed by a few layers of epithelial cells; without blood vessels), the dermis (vascularized, with support function) and the subcutis (containing the subcutaneous fat). Hair follicles are specialized structures in which hairs grow.

**Skin glands**: **Sebaceous glands and apocrine sweat glands**: are associated to hair follicles and produce a secretion that helps to protect the skin and keep it hydrated and soft. **Eccrine sweat glands**: in dogs and cats are found only in digital pads. Secrete sweat.

**Skin scraping**: collateral examination performed with a scalpel blade scraped on a lesion and then transferred onto a microscope glass in order to search for ectoparasites (eg mites).

**Spot-on**: pipette whose liquid is applied on the skin, usually between the shoulder blades.

**Topical**: drug for local use (eg. creams, spray, rinses etc.).

**Trichogram**: microscopic examination of hair shafts and roots. Plucking is the
stripping of a tuft of hair for the trichogram.

**Ulcer / Erosion:** loss of substance of the skin, superficial (erosion) or deeper (ulcer).

**Vasculitis:** inflammation of skin blood vessels (capillaries, arterioles).

**Vesicle:** small raised lesion containing a colorless liquid. In dogs and cats are rare.

**Wheal:** flattened, slightly raised, circumscribed lesion.

**Wood lamp:** a source of ultraviolet rays used to identify *Microsporum canis* (agent of dermatophytosis). If the test is negative, however, one can not exclude the disease.