

Lice in Dogs

Overview

- Louse infestations in dogs are quite uncommon. They generally only affect vulnerable dogs (young, old or unwell) and those kept in dirty or overcrowded conditions.
- Lice cause itchy, dry, scaly skin, and dandruff.
- Some lice also suck blood, which can lead to illness and anaemia.
- Treatment for lice is often relatively simple, the sooner a dog is treated, the more likely they are to recover without complications.

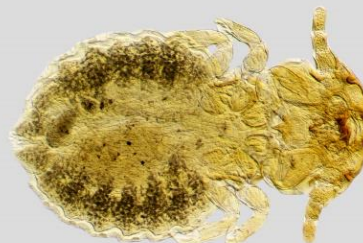
Lice explained

Lice are tiny skin parasites that cause itchy, dry, flaky skin. Some lice also suck blood, which can lead to illness and anaemia (especially in very young or small dogs).

Lice are uncommon compared to [other skin parasites](#) such as [fleas](#), [mites](#) and [ticks](#). They tend to only affect vulnerable dogs (young, old or unwell) and those living in dirty, overcrowded conditions.



A louse under the microscope



This dog has a severe louse infestation – note the brown speckles (lice) in his fur

Fortunately, lice only live on one species and very rarely cross over to others. This means it is very difficult for you to catch lice from your dog (or for your dog to catch them from you or other species).

Symptoms

If your dog has lice they may have some of the following symptoms.

- [Itchy skin](#)
- [Dry, scaly skin and dandruff](#)
- Visible lice - slow moving brown dots
- Visible lice eggs - white dots on the fur
- [Alopecia \(fur loss\)](#)
- Pale gums (due to anaemia, usually only in young animals)

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you suspect your dog has lice, or you notice any of the symptoms listed above.

You know your dog best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

Treatment

If your dog has been diagnosed with lice, they will need the following treatments:

- A product to kill the lice on your dog
 - Often a 'spot-on' or shampoo.
 - You will also need to treat any other pets that are in regular, close contact.
 - Keep your dog away from other pets until they have recovered.
- A product to kill any lice/eggs in your home.
 - Lice lay eggs that can survive in the environment for 2-3 weeks after they have been laid.

- You will need to treat pet bedding, brushes, coats and the household (eggs will continue to hatch in the environment for 2-3 weeks after they have been laid).
- Treatment for any other skin problems
 - Such as wounds or infected skin
- Treatment for anaemia
 - In the rare case of a severe louse infestation, your dog may become unwell or anaemic and need admitting into the veterinary hospital for intensive care.

It's important to follow your vets instructions carefully, and keep a close eye out for any returning symptoms for a few weeks after treatment. Always make sure you finish the full course of treatment to make sure the lice don't return.

Outlook

Given the right treatment, most dogs recover very well from a louse infestation. However, if your dog has a very large infestation, or is left without treatment for too long, there is a chance that they could develop anaemia (blood loss) especially if they are already weak, which can cause severe illness and even death.

Prevention

The best way to prevent lice is to keep your dog up to date with their flea treatments (most are effective against lice), and in clean, warm living conditions.

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