

Dandruff in dogs

Overview

Dogs like to keep themselves clean, so if you notice your dog has dandruff (dry, flaky skin) it could be a sign of a problem. There are many possible causes for dry skin and fortunately, most will improve with the correct treatment. Contact your vet for an appointment if you notice your dog has dandruff.

Dry flaky skin explained

Skin cells are always dying, shedding off and being replaced by new healthy cells. Your dog will make sure their coat stays clean and 'dandruff-free' by grooming the dead cells away.

Dry, flaky skin tends to be a sign of a problem, either an illness, a skin problem or a lack of grooming. As well as indicating a problem, dandruff is likely to make your dog itchy and uncomfortable.

Keep an eye out for other skin issues such as hair loss, red skin or a greasy or smelly coat – these could give your vet clues about the cause.

Causes

Illness

- Dogs will often start to look a little bit unkempt, develop a greasy coat and dandruff if they are feeling poorly.

Arthritis

- Dogs tend to groom themselves a bit less once they get older, often due to arthritis and stiffness.

Pain

- If your dog is in pain, they are likely to spend less time grooming.

Skin infections

- Skin infections due to bacteria, yeast or fungus (such as ringworm) usually cause flaky skin.

Mites and lice

- Parasites such as mites and lice can cause very itchy, flaky skin.

Fleas

- Fleas cause itchy skin, scratching is likely to cause dandruff.

Allergic skin disease

- Atopic dermatitis, food allergies and flea allergies can all cause itchy, dry, flaky skin.

Hormone disease

- Hormone problems such as hypothyroidism or Cushings disease often affect the skin.

Immune system problems

- Autoimmune skin disease such as pemphigus causes scaly skin.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if you start to see areas of skin becoming flaky, dry or scaly. Left untreated the problem will usually just get worse.

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.

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