

UNDER THE WEATHER

Dandruff in Dogs

Do dogs get dandruff? Yes, they do. Can it be cured? Depends... So read on, if your pet has this annoying symptom.

Dandruff is usually caused by Seborrhoea, a condition where the sebaceous glands in the skin (which produce sebum needed for lubrication of skin and hair) are hyperactive. The excess skin and sebum then clumps together and causes flaky skin, commonly known as dandruff. Dandruff is usually accompanied by a peculiar smell, and sometimes itchy skin with small bumps called urticaria. The hair may be scanty in patches or bald patches may be seen with dandruff. Depending on the location of the hair loss on the scalp, itching and dandruff, your vet will be able to identify the cause.

Some of the common causes are:

Allergies: Your dog's skin could be sensitive to several things, either in the environment like dust or pollen, or certain foods. The allergy can then manifest locally as dandruff and itchy skin. Common allergens range from dust and pollens to household cleaners to certain foods.

Chyletiella mites: Also referred to as "walking dandruff," these white mites are large enough so they look like walking flakes of dandruff! They make themselves comfortable in a dog's skin and coat while they lay eggs. They are usually seen on the back, so if you see flakes of dandruff which seem to be slowly moving along your dog's back, it may be these mites. They make life miserable for your dog due to severe itching that they cause.

Fungal/bacterial skin infection: If your dog has an underlying skin condition, it could result in an overgrowth of



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bacteria and/or fungus in the inflamed skin, causing skin flakes to form. A skin scraping and smear examination can help identify fungal spores, bacteria or skin mites, though several scrapings may be needed to catch mites. Tick and flea powders might be stripping your dog's skin of moisture, which may cause the skin to flake off.

Poor diet: If your dog isn't getting enough water to drink or enough vitamins, minerals and fat from his food, his coat will suffer. Omega-3 as well as Omega-6 fatty acids are needed in the correct proportion for a healthy skin and coat.

Treatment of dandruff:

Bathing: Regular baths will help wash away the dandruff before it can accumulate in the coat. Certain pet shampoos are designed to prevent and eliminate dandruff. The shampoos as well as sprays or lotions will be prescribed by your vet depending on the cause of dandruff. These shampoos are pH balanced for dog's skin, so do not use human shampoos for your pets.

Nutrition: Switch to a high-quality brand of pet food meant for sensitive skin. These prescription diets have serious science backing them. They are made of hydrolysed proteins, which means the proteins are broken down into components the body doesn't recognise as an 'allergen'. There is a single source of carbohydrates, and essential fatty acids in the right proportion. These foods also have clinically proven antioxidants, which help to maintain a healthy skin barrier. Put several water dishes throughout the house so your dog will always have access to fresh water.

Oatmeal: This is very useful for soothing dry, itchy skin. It is available in the form of sprays and shampoos. 

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