3 Steps Toward a Healthy Coat

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

nutritionalsolutions to skin and coat problems

Problems with skin and coat are top reasons dog owners take their dogs to the veterinarian in cold weather. Symptoms owners report include itching and chewing, hot spots, dull haircoat, or even chronic ear infections.

THESE SIGNS may indicate a number of common skin conditions. The good news is that studies have found that certain nutrients, found in quality pet foods, supplements, and multivitamins, can help with some of the symptoms your pet experiences.

Feed a Quality Diet

Did you know that skin and haircoat condition can be a key indicator of your pet's health? And that dietary factors may play a role in the causes of skin disease? A good diet, including a high level of protein, may help your pet's skin. The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) has created dog food nutrient profiles, which specify the percentage levels of nutrients that should be present in pet foods. In creating our dog foods we chose healthy, quality ingredients that would provide most pets with virtually all the nutrients they need. But because each individual pet's nutritional needs are different, supplements can help fulfill each pet's specific nutritional needs and deficiencies.

Supplement with Fatty Acids

Healthy skin or healthy coat?

You may be wondering which supplements your pet needs to maintain his healthy skin or which he needs to maintain his healthy coat.

If the main goal is to support healthy skin, think of the Omega-3 fatty acids EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) or DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid). Remember this by thinking of "Epidermis" and "Dermis," the top two layers of skin. Skin conditions such as atopy (allergies to inhaled substances like pollens and molds) result in inflammation. Since EPA and DHA as well as the

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Fatty acids are helpful for your pet for many reasons: they are vital for cell structure and function, they play a role in curtailing inflammation, and they can enhance the palatability of your pet's food. Fatty acid deficiency can result in hair loss, oily skin, and minor skin infections. Skin conditions that may respond to essential fatty acid supplementation include canine inhalant allergies and flea allergy dermatitis. Supplements high in fatty acids, such as those in our Healthy Coat series can benefit pets with certain skin conditions as well as dry skin and haircoat.

Provide Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamins and minerals play a critical role in your pet's health on many levels, including skin and haircoat condition. Some of these include

- The mineral zinc, which helps regulate many aspects of cellular metabolism, some of which are related to maintenance of healthy skin and haircoat.
- A deficiency or an excess of Vitamin A can cause scaling of the skin and create a poor haircoat as well as susceptibility to skin infections. A balance of this important vitamin is essential.
- Dry, flaky seborrhea, dull haircoat, and hair loss are also seen in deficiency of B vitamins, including Biotin and Pyridoxine.

Oral supplementation with a product like our Brewer's Yeast and/or oral administration of a multivitamin, such as our Lifestage Select® Multivitamins is usually effective in cases of vitamin deficiency.

Omega-6 fatty acid GLA (Gamma Linolenic Acid) result in less inflammatory substances being produced in the body, animals being treated for atopy may benefit from supplementation with these fatty acids.

If your main goal is to support a healthy coat, think of the Omega-6 fatty acids Linoleic and Linolenic, or "Lustrous" and "Luxurious," signs of a healthy coat. Haircoats which are dull, brittle, and dry often respond to supplementation with Omega-6 fatty acids, especially LA (Linoleic acid). It has also been found that in some cases of seborrhea, there is a deficiency of LA in the skin. In these cases, supplements high in LA are useful. The addition of EPA and DHA is also beneficial since they help negate the release of substances that cause inflammation (like AA, or Arachidonic Acid) from cells damaged because of seborrhea.

Remember that the polyunsaturated fats in fatty acid supplements increase the need for antioxidants. Fatty acid supplements should be fortified with Vitamin E, or if your pet is taking a fatty acid supplement, he should also get a supplement high in antioxidants. Many veterinary dermatologists recommend that fatty acids be used for 9-12 weeks.

It is true that dealing with a pet's skin condition can be incredibly frustrating. Fortunately, we have an array of premium foods, supplements, and vitamins which

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an astute owner can use to help their pet with some of these skin conditions.

We Recommend

Drs. Foster and Smith Dog Foods

Oral Supplements and Treats for Skin and Coat

Drs. Foster & Smith Lifestage Select® Vitamins

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