Skin & Coat Care Overview

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Many factors contribute to the appearance and health of your dog's skin and coat. Like humans, dogs are exposed to many environmental triggers that can cause skin reactions, such as pollutants, parasites, allergens, and even the foods they consume.

Knowing how to maintain your pet's healthy skin and coat is key to preventing problems that mar his appearance and health. In order to assist you in keeping your pet in tip-top shape, we've classified skin and coat care into four groups: oral supplements, topical care, shed control, and shampoos.

Oral supplements and treats

Most veterinarians agree that building healthy skin and coat begins from the inside out. Feeding a premium, nutritious diet high in quality sources of protein and vitamins and minerals and balanced fatty acids is our first recommendation. But you can also fill in the gaps with oral supplementation and treats. Oral supplements come in many forms: liquid, capsules, granules, or treats. Look for supplements with marine lipid fatty acids, such as our Premium Plus Omega-3 Gel Caps or Vitacaps®. Fatty acids are used widely to support and nourish healthy skin. The use of Biotin along with fatty acids is thought to enhance their effectiveness. Since the environment is as hard on your pet's skin as it is on yours, we recommend supplementation with antioxidant vitamins such as A, C, and E to help support the body's normal defenses. You can get these antioxidants in supplements such as Premium Plus® Healthy Skin Tabs or Vitacoat® Plus.

Since many owners provide treats for their dogs, you can combine the affection-giving act of treating with supplementation. Many treats on the market today contain some of the skin-supporting nutrients listed above, and many are even marketed specifically for skin and coat. Treats such as Premium Plus® Skin & Coat Bites contain fatty acids and the antioxidant nutrient Vitamin C. For health-conscious owners, many of these are also low in calories and fat.

Topical Care

Skin health can also be managed with the use of products that provide topical support of skin comfort to help keep your pet from scratching and pawing at his skin.

Products that contain hydrocortisone and lidocaine, such as Drs. Foster & Smith Itch Stop Series, give you many options: a fast-acting spray, a rub-on salve, a shampoo, a soothing lotion, and convenient pads.

Products with infection-fighting chlorhexidine are also ideal, such as Drs. Foster & Smith Septi-Soothe™ Treatments, Septi-Soothe™ Shampoo, or ChlorhexiDerm Shampoo.

Many of the same oral supplements used to build healthy skin can also help reduce shedding in your pet. Unfortunately, nothing can prevent dogs from shedding altogether. Your best approach is equipping yourself with products that help make shedding invisible in your home. Investing in good grooming tools, such as a Slicker Brush and Shed Blade, as well as other shed-control products will help catch shedding hair before it can reach your rugs and furniture.

Many owners keep a well-stocked closet with items such as sticky tape rollers and shed mitts for quick clean-ups of their pet and their pet's environment. A wipe-down a few times a week can go a long way in allergy-causing dander found in shedding hair.

Shampoos

Finally, shampooing your pet with the correct shampoo at bath time can have a positive impact on your dog's skin and coat health. It can stave off a number of health problems as well as make your dog look nicer and more appealing to be around. There are many shampoos to choose from depending on your pet's hair coat, skin condition, or desired result. It is important that you do not use shampoos made for humans. They contain harsher detergents and could damage hair or sensitive skin.

We offer shampoos formulated specifically for your pet's needs. Oatmeal Shampoo, as well as Itch Stop Shampoo, can help support normal skin comfort. Septi-Soothe Shampoo contains chlorhexidine, an anti-bacterial ingredient.

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If your pet is super-sensitive and reacts easily to detergents and fragrances, a milder shampoo formula such as our Hypo-Allergenic Shampoo, is recommended. The oat protein moisturizes and Vitamins A and E promote healthy skin and comfort. Medicated Shampoo contains Miconazole, an antifungal against fungi and yeast; and Chlorhexidine Gluconate, a proven antimicrobial agent necessary to cut through oily coats and wash away built up scales and dander.

Since no two dogs are alike, it pays for you to thoroughly review your dog's special skin and coat needs and your available options before choosing the products that best fit your needs.

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