Changes in Skin and Haircoat of Senior Dogs

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As with people, dogs may start to show changes in their skin and hair as they get older. Become aware of these changes so you are prepared to deal with them.

Haircoat: Hair turns gray, mainly on the muzzle and around the eyes in an older dog. The haircoat may also become thinner and duller. Haircoat is one of the first lines of defense against a harsh environment, so groom the haircoat to keep it in top shape. Grooming also makes your senior feel better and gives you important one-on-one time with him. Fatty acid supplements, especially Omega-6 fatty acids, will help maintain an older pet's shiny, lustrous haircoat.

Skin: A senior dog's skin may become thinner and drier. Hormonal changes may leave the skin fragile, more prone to injury, and slower to heal. Some older dogs develop multiple benign tumors of the skin, which are generally not removed unless easily traumatized. Dry skin can be a problem for seniors, and spray-on moisturizers may be beneficial.

Nails: Senior dogs have thicker, more brittle nails, and they are less likely to be active enough to wear them down. Therefore, it is important to clip your dog's nails regularly to prevent the nails from curling and growing into the pads.

Be alert to skin and haircoat changes, as they may signal a disease condition. If they do change significantly, your dog should be seen by a veterinarian.

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