

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

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Skin Problems in Dogs

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Skin problems are so common in dogs it seems that many people just accept their pet's scratching and hair loss as "normal". But the truth is, it is not normal. It is a disease that can make you and your pet miserable. There are many, many causes of hair loss in dogs, but the three most common are: Allergies, Fleas, and Mange.

Just like people are **allergic to pollens and molds**, so are some dogs. This usually causes your pet to **chew his feet, get a red stomach, and have recurrent ear infections and hot spots** {red, raw areas}. There are several types of treatments for allergies, but no cure. It is a life long problem that requires constant medication and treatment.

Fleas are a very common cause of skin problems and again, some people almost consider fleas inevitable part of owning a dog. However, that is not true. Fleas are a disease that can be cured by medical treatments obtained through your veterinarian. Fleas usually cause scratching all over, but the major hair loss is along the back, especially towards the tail. Fleas can be eliminated easily now with prescription medication, so there is no excuse for allowing your pet to suffer.

Mange seems to get the blame more often than it deserves. It is the least common of the three mentioned problems. There are in fact two types of mange, Demodectic and Sarcoptic.

Demodectic mange is caused by a mite that is normally on your pet, but due to a faulty immune system, your puppy is unable to keep the mite population from over growing. In most cases, as your puppy ages, he will develop enough immunity to the mite, but he will often need several treatments with a special dip at first. Occasionally, we will see a dog that will never be able to control the mites and will need constant treatment. A dog that has ever had a demodex infection should never be bred since it is a hereditary disease. Although this type of mange doesn't cause itching, it does cause patchy hair loss and can lead to severe skin infections.

The second type of mange, **Sarcoptic**, is caused by a mite usually transmitted from another infected dog or from a fox. It is impossible to see the mite without a microscope and it is hard to

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diagnose this disease with the usual tests. But treatment is pretty simple, just several injections with a special medication or an ointment applied every other week will cure your pet. This type of mange causes intense itching and hair loss usually around the legs and stomach.

These are just a few of the causes of skin problems in pets. Fungal infections, bacterial infections, lice, ticks and even cancer can all cause skin problems. For a thorough exam, diagnosis and treatment of any skin problem, please contact your veterinarian. If you have any questions, please call the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643.