

Points on Pets: Dog will feel dandy without dandruff

by R.G. Elmore, D.V.M.

Q: We recently noticed that our dog has flaky skin. It seems like she is constantly dropping dandruff and scaly skin pieces on us. We wonder if this problem is caused by the dry heat that our dog is exposed to nearly all of the time now that the weather outside is usually cold and miserable. We do not notice this problem in the summer. We also wonder if her dog food or vitamins are contributing to her skin problems.

A: Of course, it is impossible to tell why your dog seems to have an excess of dandruff and flakiness without actually seeing her and knowing much more about her environment and exactly what you are feeding her. It is possible that the dry air often experienced in houses during winter is contributing to your dog's skin problems. Installing a humidifier on your furnace might correct this problem. However, it unlikely immediate improvement will be seen.

You should have your dog examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible. Ask your veterinarian about the particular dog food and vitamins that you are feeding her. Your veterinarian might find other reasons for your dog's poor hair coat. The shampoo that you routinely use, endocrine disorders and allergies could be additional reasons for your dog's flakiness. Obtaining an accurate diagnosis as soon as possible is the key to correcting your dog's problem.

After examining your dog, your veterinarian will be able to tell you which diet will be the best for your dog. The vet can recommend a complete wellness program, including internal and external parasite control, prophylactic dental care and vaccinations that protect against the commonly diagnosed canine diseases in your area.

Spending a little money on a high quality dog food and maintaining a complete wellness program is often less expensive than treating ailments that could have been prevented. Doing this will also make your dog more comfortable and make her a much happier pet.

Q: We were recently surprised when our veterinarian recommended a special prescription diet for our dog for liver disease. Are diseases of the liver common in dogs? Our dog does not consume any alcohol, unlike his owners, and has always been fed a high-quality commercial dog food. We have noticed that our dog has decreased her level of physical activity during the last year. We thought that this was just due to old age.

A: Liver disease is common in dogs. Causes include traumatic shock due to severe blows to the abdomen, infections caused by bacteria and viruses, deterioration because of exposure to toxins, and poor circulation secondary to other diseases such as heart failure. Diagnosing the exact cause of liver failure in many dogs is often impossible.

Treatment of liver failure in dogs usually includes feeding prescription diets and giving daily medications. Although liver disorders in dogs are usually serious, many dogs with liver problems live long, happy lives with proper medications and diets. You are fortunate that your veterinarian diagnosed the problem and has started a treatment regime.

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