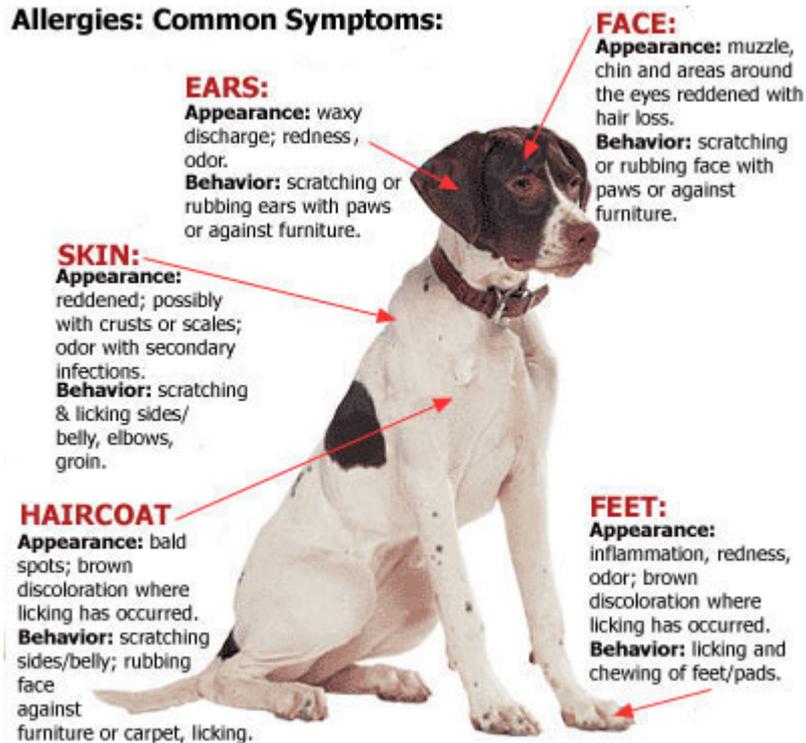


Grooming Dogs with Allergies

What is an allergy you may ask? An allergy is an over sensitivity to a substance. The most common causes of allergies in dogs affecting the skin include: pollens, grasses, fleas, dust mites and food. Like humans some dogs are more prone to allergies than other dogs, which can make life for them very uncomfortable. However, unlike humans who react to allergies mostly through their noses, dogs react to allergies mostly via their skin and ears. Their skin becomes red and inflamed. These dogs will itch themselves if a person lightly touches them on their back or around their tail. When dogs are affected by an allergy they will scratch, bite, chew their feet and lick their skin constantly which in turn leads to the skin breaking down into sores. Constant licking can also cause a fungal infection making the skin itchier and so the dog licks more leading to a severe condition known as a hot spot.



Hot Spots are an acute moist dermatitis, which is an acutely inflamed and infected area of skin irritation. A hot spot can start and spread rapidly in a matter of hours as an underlying Staphylococcus infection and can cause the top layers of the skin to break down as pus becomes trapped in the hair. Clipping the hair from around the lesion and using a corticosteroid medication and an oral as well as topical antibiotic can help treat hot spots.



This constant scratching, biting and licking makes it very hard for owners with longhaired dogs to comb and brush out their dogs' coat. As a result of not being able to maintain their dogs coat properly knots begin to appear. Most of the time these knots can be removed with little to no discomfort to the dog, however when there are lots of knots close together the hair becomes matted and this matting can be very difficult to remove causing the dog pain.

Matting can become much worse when the dog is bathed or gets wet by causing the hair to shrink around the matting and once the hair is dry the matt becomes larger and tighter. This in turn reduces the blood flow to the skin and causes severe discomfort and damage to the skin. Therefore all knots and matting is best to be removed prior to bathing. Again care must be taken in removing severe matting because once the matting is clipped away the increased blood flow can cause the capillaries (small blood vessels) to rupture and produce extensive bruising. Severe matting can also mask problems such as hot spots, scabs, grass seeds and warts.

All dogs with skin allergies will be helped by regularly being washed in an anti-fungal shampoo that their dog's vet prescribes. However, these anti-fungal shampoos can have a drying effect on the skin, when this happens we will rewash these dogs in an oatmeal based shampoo to moisturise the dogs' skin then use a camomile conditioner to soothe the skin after the washing.

For dogs with long coats that present suffering from an allergy, groomers should advise taking the coat short as this stops overheating and allows the topical medications that the vets prescribe to work more effectively. If a dog who is prone to suffer from allergies, but is not having problem at the time, regular combing and brushing will keep the knots out and then this dog's coat can be kept long. Regular bathing using oatmeal based shampoo and a good quality conditioner, designed for dogs with skin allergies, will keep the coat in good condition.

Dogs prone to allergies need to be washed and groomed more regularly than dogs not prone to allergies. By keeping your dog's skin in good condition especially in the hotter months you will be saving your dog from much unnecessary suffering and both their life and yours will be better from this extra care and attention.

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