

# Key Factors to Maintain a Healthy & Shiny Dog Coat

**WORDS:** Isabella Whitmore



One of the most important responsibilities when taking care of dogs is keeping them healthy and happy. This includes making sure that their fur is clean and in good condition. Because a dog's coat can greatly affect their overall health and comfort, here are the key factors to maintain a healthy and shiny coat.

All dogs are beautiful no matter what their hair looks like. But as a fur parent, it can be frustrating to see your dog having coat problems; like experiencing dry and flaky fur or excessive shedding. More importantly, a healthy and nice-looking coat is not just for appearance. It helps them regulate body temperature, protects them from cold weather and keeps their skin away from dirt which may be carrying bacteria.

Unlike humans who may just have a bad hair day, dogs' hair problems are more complicated than just appearance. Their coat condition can be an indication of health issues, such as diseases, allergies, nutrient deficiency, and parasite infestation to name a few. These health problems can be manifested by excessive hair loss, dry and flaky coats and dull fur.

It is important to take care of your dog's coat. Here are what you can do to help maintain their healthy, shiny dog coat:

## Providing a good diet

Nutrient deficiency can greatly affect pooches' fur. They need a sufficient amount of protein and Omega-3 and 6 fatty acids to maintain a healthy coat. Protein helps regrow lost hair from shedding. While the fatty acids help nourish the skin to secrete natural oils making the coat shiny. Feeding nutritious, quality dog foods ensures your pet is getting enough of the nutrients needed for well-conditioned fur.

## Carefully Choosing a Shampoo

Some shampoos are too strong which can remove the natural oils in the skin, leaving the fur dry or even falling. Always go for gentle shampoos or better yet, those with oat or olive oil to help nourish skin and coat. You can find shampoos for your specific needs, such as anti-tangle or whitening shampoos. Avoid using anti-tick and flea shampoos as they can cause hair dryness and dandruff.



## Regular Brushing

Regular brushing helps remove tangled and fallen hair which prevents coat matting. A common hair problem, mostly for long-coated dogs in which their fur forms a mat on a dog's body. This can spread to the whole body causing severe discomfort.

*(Refer to the article on page 30 - 'Essential Tips for Effective Dog Brushing')*

## Avoid Excessive Bathing

Pooches do not need frequent bathing as they know how to groom themselves. They only need to bath once a month to allow the natural oils in their skin to nourish their hair and make it glow. Too much bathing can wash out natural oils in the skin, which can lead to dull and dry hair.



## FEATURE

### Ensure your Dog's Skin is Ready for Summer

As spring and summer arrive many dogs experience skin problems. The most common sign that your dog has problems with his skin is persistent itching and scratching.

Your dog may also experience excessive licking, shaking his head or rubbing his face or back on the floor or carpet. If not treated effectively your dog could experience skin rashes, extremely dry skin and hair loss.

Skin irritations in dogs can be caused by many factors from a simple nutritional deficiency that can be treated with food supplements to a hormonal imbalance. Knowing the cause of the irritation is an important part of effective treatment.

Just as the changing of the seasons can affect the moisture levels in human skin, seasonal changes can play a significant role in the moisture levels in your dog's skin. Dry skin allows irritants to get under the surface of the skin and can cause redness and inflammation. Supplementing your dog's diet with Omega 3 & 6 oils can help make sure your dog's skin is ready for the summer.



Seasonal allergies, such as hay fever, can also affect the quality of your dog's skin. A dog releases histamines in response to pollen through his skin. A dog with seasonal allergies can be a most miserable creature if he goes untreated. The symptoms can be soothed by giving your dog a bath in an oatmeal shampoo or another shampoo designed to soothe the skin.

Frequent grooming also helps remove pollen and other dirt and irritants from the dog's coat. Again, supplements containing Omega 3 & 6 oils can help keep the dog's skin healthy and better able to fight off the irritants.

Parasites, such as fleas and ticks, are the most common cause of skin irritations for your dog. Fleas and ticks are easy to see and there are many effective treatments available to help rid your dog of the parasites and relieve the symptoms. Mites are more difficult to detect as they are microscopic. Your dog would need to be examined by your veterinarian in order to diagnose mites. Mites are the cause of mange, a skin irritation that causes hair loss. Mange requires extensive treatment with special parasiticide shampoo and medications that can be administered topically, orally or by injection. If untreated, mange can be a life-threatening condition.

As spring and summer continue, with dog skin problems it is important to observe your dog for any signs or symptoms of skin irritation. Make sure that your dog is getting an adequate amount of Omega 3 & 6 oils. Check frequently for fleas and ticks. Keep the skin and coat clean. Make sure your dog's skin is ready for the summer.

As always, please consult your local veterinarian if you have any concerns.

~ **Words: Graeme Knight**