

Vet's Corner – Skin Conditions in your Greyhound

Many greyhounds when they come out of racing and into the GAP scheme have coats that look quite poor. This is not necessarily due to neglect of the previous owner/trainer but it is a fact of life that when these dogs are no longer performing then their standard of grooming and feeding may change and often they moult/lose hairs excessively.

Often all that is needed to improve their coats is improved diet and grooming. Many of the dogs we see initially in the scheme just bloom with these changes and look completely different dogs within 3-4 weeks.

Greyhounds are glabrous (ventrally nude) and their skin is less protected. Because of this lack of hair, skin blemishes are of course much more obvious than the more hirsute (hairy) breeds. Most dogs have been kennelled without significant bedding and lying on hard surfaces can cause pressure points with consequent hair loss.

Skin conditions include:

➔ Comedone (Black heads)

These are pimples (black heads) which are found on their lower chest. This is more cosmetic than medical but is not a pleasant look. Sometimes this condition will resolve itself when the dog is in its new home with improved bedding and medicated shampoo. Most conditions benefit from the dog being on a supplement of the essential Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids. These fatty acids can be supplied in a variety of oral or topical forms. Sometimes Comedones may become infected and need treatment with antibiotics, which will require a visit to your vet.

➔ Hot Spots

These are typical of a minor condition which can become much more severe when the dog chews scratches or rubs it. Because of lack of hair these are often seen before they get too bad, and often a topical cream will settle them down. Often, stopping the dog chewing or licking a skin lesion will also prevent it getting worse.

➔ Nail Bed inflammation (Onyxis)

Greyhounds' nails are often a source of pain and discomfort. When you think about the force that is exerted on nails when they are racing, it is not surprising that the nail beds can and do become injured or infected. This may be due to accidental trauma but is often just the force of sand and dirt being driven up under the nail bed.

➔ Traumatic onyxis

This is very common and usually only affects one nail (often the dew claw D1). This is usually obvious and painful, and is treated by removal of the piece of nail. Use an antiseptic bandage for a day or two and these will be fine. Making sure nails are regularly trimmed will help prevent this.

➔ Infection of the Nails/Fungal Toe (infected onyxis)

This may be seen on just one toe but may be related to a systemic condition, ie some other disease process (such as Cushings or Hypothyroidism) and will affect multiple nails. Diagnosis of such infection may require a bacterial or fungal culture taken to find the underlying cause, and then treatment with specific drugs.

➔ Pododermatitis

This is also common in dogs where there is inflammation between the toes. These are often related to canine atopy or food allergy. Treatment can be difficult and may require allergen testing and symptomatic treatment with antihistamines and steroids.

➔ Sunburn/Solar Dermatitis

This is particularly important with non-pigmented skin. Dogs love to sunbathe. They need shelter/shade and also application of a sunscreen with UV blocking agents. Any human cream with blocking agent and a 30+ rating will help protect the skin and needs to be applied daily if your dog is lying in direct sun.

➔ Balding Thighs (Shiny Butt)

The cause of this condition is not known, often misdiagnosed as Hypothyroidism (low T4) it affects the skin on the backs of their thigh. This condition is largely cosmetic similar to baldness in people. It is NOT linked to Hypothyroidism and supplementation with Thyroid medicines will not cure it. At your next greyhound picnic have a prize for the "Shiny Hiney"!

These are just a few of the conditions seen in greyhounds, and the list is far from complete but I hope this helps in looking after your fast friend. ■

by Dr Dave Angove.

Left: bald thigh syndrome. Right: close up of comedones.

