

## Dealing With Dog Dandruff

**An expert answers questions on dog care.**

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Healthy dogs should not drag the tops of their feet or nails when they walk, regardless of the length of their legs. Your dog is failing to lift his feet high enough and/or long enough to properly advance the limb. His reluctance to walk in grass may be further indication of a gait problem. It is harder to advance the dragging front feet in the grass, even though it would reduce the nail damage and be more comfortable. Your dog's reluctance to play and its tendency to be overweight may also be due to the gait abnormality. Conversely, obesity will worsen many gait problems.

Dragging of the front feet and nails usually indicates a problem with the nerves or muscle and skeletal structure. The abnormal gait can result from loss of mechanical function, weakness or pain. Congenital or acquired neurologic lesions can cause weakness, an altered ability to move the affected limb(s) in a normal manner and a loss of sensation or perception of the limb's location. Disease of the brain or spinal cord in the neck could cause the signs you describe. Abnormalities of the spinal column &mdash; such as the instability of the vertebrae, especially near the base of the skull &mdash; would be a strong consideration in this case.

Primary muscular diseases would probably affect other limbs and parts of the body, too. Skeletal disease affecting the joints of the forelimbs, especially the shoulders or elbows, could result in pain or decreased range of motion. Such diseases might include elbow dysplasia, arthritis, bicipital bursitis and calcification (inflammation and calcium buildup in the biceps' tendon and bursa), and osteochondritis dissecans, which commonly affects the shoulders and elbows.

I strongly encourage you to consult with your veterinarian to check for these conditions. A physical and neurologic exam with X-rays of the neck and affected forelimbs would be an excellent place to start. If no abnormalities are found, I would consider consulting with a surgical specialist.

Your veterinarian can show you how to durably wrap your dog's feet and provide you with bandage supplies.