

Cocker Spaniels With Skin Irritations

How to help a Cocker Spaniel with sensitive skin.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. I am contemplating getting a Cocker Spaniel for our family. I am aware that Cocker Spaniels by nature have skin irritations among other health problems. Any recommendations on what kind of shampoo should be used?

A. A well-bred Cocker Spaniel can make an excellent family pet. I specify “well-bred” because I have seen too many examples of this beautiful breed coming from puppy mills or disreputable pet stores that had all kinds of health and temperament problems.

This most popular of the smaller Spaniels was once a hunting dog, alerting the hunter by crouching in the brush once they spotted a woodcock or other game bird. Primarily prized as companions and show dogs today, they still love to romp outdoors.

Skin problems like Seborrhea and Dermatitis to which Cockers are prone can be avoided if you feed a premium food that has Omega fatty acids and plenty of protein. Avoid foods heavy in grain as yeast infections are another common health issue preventable through a proper diet. Sensitive-skinned Cockers are also prone to allergies from food, the environment, and flea bites. If your pet shows no signs of skin issues, use a puppy tearless shampoo and a conditioning rinse when you bathe him. If there is any itchiness or dry skin, use a medicated oatmeal shampoo and leave the lather on for 10 minutes before you rinse. Be very careful not to get shampoo into the Cocker’s sensitive eyes.

Cockers are high-spirited so obedience training is a must. In addition to learning basic commands, your baby needs to recognize you as his leader. It’s also important to get him used to brushing as this dog’s luxurious tresses are the hallmark of its beauty. Most Cocker-owning clients bring their pets in to be groomed every four to six weeks and brush them regularly between visits.

Cockers’ long ears can get them in trouble too, dipping into food and water dishes, picking up debris outdoors and because they are heavy and pendulous, offering the perfect breeding ground for ear infections. Get your puppy used to having his ears swabbed out with an over-the-counter ear wash a couple of times a week to prevent such problems.

Happy and extremely people-oriented, Cocker Spaniels retain their adorable puppy personas throughout their lives. I wish you well in finding the right one for your family.