

## Cocker Spaniel With Skin Problems

**Consult with a vet to determine the cause of a dog's tarry skin patches.**

*By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG*

Q. I have an American Cocker Spaniel. We love her very much, but she is very stinky. She has thick tarry patches on her skin, mostly her underside, and she constantly licks herself. We have taken her to the vet and he said it might be allergies. Any suggestions as to how we can help her skin condition?

A. Cocker Spaniels are wonderful and lovable dogs, but they do have their share of skin problems. If she has thick tarry patches on her skin, she probably has had this problem for a long enough time to change her skin texture, causing thickening and hair loss. Sometimes mange mites cause such a condition but I would assume your vet took a skin scraping to check for such microscopic parasites.

Cockers are often prone to seborrhea and dermatitis, two conditions which can cause a funky odor and result skin that is itchy, oily, flaky, or all three. It's important to work with your veterinarian to determine the underlying cause of skin problems.

In addition to consulting with your vet, there is something you can do to help treat your dog's skin problem. Try a medicated shampoo. You – or your groomer – should use one containing anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-microbial ingredients. In the salon, we use and sell one called MicroTek. We leave the lather on for a full 15 minutes to let it soak in and we recommend the pet owner use it weekly between grooming visits. It controls odor and can be diluted but we use it full-strength.

Another thing I have learned about treating what groomers commonly refer to as "Cocker crud" is not to vigorously scrub or brush skin that is already irritated. The skin is the largest organ of your dog's body and when it is injured, it must be handled with care. If your dog's coat is matted, let the groomer clip the hair down so you can better treat the skin without inflaming it further. It's far better to remove that flaky debris with the volume of warm water sprayed on it than to abrade it by scrubbing or brushing. After the pet has soaked in the tub, rinse, rinse, then rinse some more.

Don't expect the situation to be remedied overnight by these changes. By consulting with your vet, and carefully treating your dog's skin, you can treat her current condition and hopefully prevent it from happening in the future.