

Dog Channel - What To Do About Tear Stains

More Grooming Tips

A Good Idea?

Frise

Grooming for seniors

What To Do About Tear Stains

All kinds of conditions can cause those red streaks.

Summer Shave:

Fluffing up a Bichon

Stop the Static Shock

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. I have a Maltese named Dolly who has chronic eye stains. Her face always looks dirty. I had my groomer shave out the stained hair, but now they are showing up on her skin. I have tried products that say they will clear up eye stain, but nothing has worked. Any suggestions?

A. Those unsightly reddish-brown stains indicate a red yeast infection caused by excessive tearing, a condition called "epiphora." When Dolly's under-eye area is constantly wet, it becomes a breeding ground for bacteria and yeast. It may also cause her discomfort and give off a foul odor, preventing Dolly from getting the cuddling she deserves. It is very common in the Maltese breed and other small dogs with short muzzles and big eyes like the Shih Tzu, as well as flat-faced Persian cats.

Have Dolly checked by her vet for related ear infections or ingrown hairs that may cause inflammation, exacerbating the problem.

Dental problems also cause excessive tearing, often producing such stains in Maltese pups when they cut their adult teeth.

Unfortunately, Dolly may have inherited the tendency to small tear ducts that clog easily. The vet may prescribe an antibiotic to treat her.

I do not recommend shaving the stained hair. Allow it to grow out, and tie it up in one or two topknots, gently combing the hair below the eyes down the sides of the nose and cheeks. A dab of petroleum jelly may help train the hair to grow in the right direction.

In addition to over-the-counter eye stain removers, there are also products that you can add to Dolly's food every day to combat yeast infections. They prevent tear staining by tying up porphyrins, the compounds in your dog's system that react to light and oxidize, producing that rusty color. Your breeder or an online news group for Maltese owners may furnish more information on this dietary approach.

Cleanliness is key. Wash the under-eye area twice daily, using a cotton ball and warm water. Make sure your own hands are hospital-clean when you touch Dolly's face. Do not allow crusty matter to build up in the corners. It can stick to the skin, causing sores and scabbing.

Avoid bleaching compounds that might irritate your dog's sensitive eyes and skin. Bear in mind that no matter which product you use to treat the stains topically — liquid, gel or powdery paste — you must be diligent, using it daily after you wash the area.

Avoid dog foods and treats that contain artificial coloring. Try switching to a premium food with no wheat or corn, substances that often cause allergies in dogs. Dolly may also benefit from drinking bottled water and eating from stainless

steel or crockery dishes instead of plastic.

While you devote yourself to cleaning up Dolly's face, if anyone asks about those under-eye stains, just tell them her mascara is running!