

Possible Causes for Mysterious Hair Loss

Young dog starts losing hair, and veterinarians can't seem to diagnose.

Jon Geller, DVM

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A second possibility is a condition known as atopy, where your dog is allergic to something in the air (dust mites, mold spores, chemical odors from carpet, secondhand smoke), and it is manifested as skin disease. This is more challenging to diagnose, but there are blood tests, and more extensive skin tests, that are very accurate. Sometimes a trial treatment with prednisone is necessary to confirm diagnosis.

A third possibility is skin disease secondary to food allergies. Dietary trials with diets like fish and potatoes, lamb and rice, etc., can rule this out. You must try the new diet for at least four weeks to confirm a diagnosis.

In the meantime, I would provide your dog with supportive care such as oral antibiotics, topical antibiotics, fatty acid supplements and antihistamines to reduce itching.

You might want to consider visiting with a board-certified veterinary dermatologist. Yes, it may be costly, but most likely he or she will get to the bottom of the problem quickly. Most primary veterinarians are very good at dealing with more common skin conditions, but the more unusual ones can be very challenging and frustrating to diagnose and treat, for veterinarians and owners alike.

Best,
Jon Geller, DVM

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