

## Possible Causes for Mysterious Hair Loss

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

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Q. My question has to do with my mixed breed. Bella is an 11-month-old, spayed, 33-pound Beagle-German Shepherd Dog mix. Her coat is tan, cream and light black. Two weeks after getting her from the SPCA, we noticed that she had several black patches of skin under her coat. Her skin is pinkish white normally, so it is quite noticeable. Her fur started to fall out in these patches. The areas affected are her head, under her front armpit, on her front paw, her rump and her crotch area.

I have taken her to three vets, and nobody can tell me what the problem is. One tested for ring worm and told me it looked like blackheads. I had to laugh. I know that dogs can get blackheads, but these blackish areas almost have a blueish tone to them with a reddish-pink ring and crusty areas. He ended up prescribing a peroxide shampoo which did nothing.

It's clearly something other than your typical battle with mites or fleas, both of which have been ruled out with a skin scraping.

The other vet told me that a biopsy would be the best route but wanted to charge \$400! Since we hadn't done any bloodwork, I opted out of spending that much.

Not one of these vets took any blood samples. I ended up with yet another shampoo: Malaseb.

It's been a month since we first noticed these patches of skin, and I've noticed that her appetite has increased as well. She is bottomless and eats her three-fourths of a cup of dry food in less than two minutes (which might be normal). Sometimes she cannot keep her food down.

Does it seem like these symptoms tie into each other? Or is this anything you've ever heard of?

A. I am sorry you have had such a difficult time getting your dog's skin condition diagnosed. I have some telepathic powers, but doing cyber diagnosis is not one of them.

However, I do have a few suggestions. One skin disease which is tied to increased appetite is hypothyroidism, where the thyroid gland becomes inactive and metabolism slows down. As part of this, the immune system is suppressed, and affected dogs are very prone to skin conditions. A blood test to measure thyroid hormone is a simple way to rule this out, and it is not costly.