

Check into Hypothyroidism for Dog's Hair Loss

Diagnosis of dog's hair loss and flaky skin starts with skin tests.

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have a chocolate Labrador Retriever. She is slowly losing her hair on her sides between her ribs and butt. She doesn't appear to scratch, but loves to roll and rub on the ground. I've noticed that the area above her tail is flaky when I brush her.

Is there something I can feed her to get rid of this dry skin? Is there a topical cream I can put on her skin? The area on her right side is quite red where the hair is gone, but there are no open sore or scales. Other than that, she appears to be quite healthy.

A. Many Labrador-type breeds are susceptible to a problem with their thyroid glands, called hypothyroidism. The thyroid gland doesn't produce enough thyroid hormone, usually as a result of damage to the thyroid gland from an overactive immune system.

Signs of hypothyroidism include generalized hair loss, flaky skin, weight gain, and sometimes decreased activity. Simple skin tests can diagnose hypothyroidism. An inexpensive, chewable thyroid supplement medication treats it.

Although there are other causes of hair loss and flaky skin, it's best to rule out hypothyroidism first.