

## Essential Fatty Acids and Your Dog's Coat

**Your dog's drab or dry coat could benefit from essential fatty acids.**

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A dry, matted, or generally unhealthy looking coat may suggest that your dog needs more essential fatty acids in her diet.

A study appearing in the June 1, 2007 issue of the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) indicates that the health and appearance of your dog's skin and coat are affected by the amount of essential fatty acids (EFAs) such as omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids. The study also suggested that EFAs, which the body itself cannot produce, contribute to your dog's overall health.

But don't go to your local pet store to stock up on EFAs just yet. According to Dr. John Bauer, a professor of clinical nutrition at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine and one of the study's author's, "Pet foods are manufactured to maintain the health of healthy pets and already contain adequate essential fatty acids."

This means that if your dog's skin and coat are healthy, there is no need to supplement her diet with additional EFA products.

Here's another caveat: Only add EFA supplements, such as linseed oil or sunflower oil, to your dog's diet if skin or coat problems have been diagnosed by your veterinarian. "Pet owners should not self-medicate," says Bauer. "A veterinarian should recommend an appropriate amount of oil to be added to the diet."

Bauer and his colleagues noticed improvements after 28 days of EFA supplementation. They saw the most noticeable changes at seven weeks.

For more information about this study or the American Veterinary Medical Association, visit [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).