

Puppy Hair Loss

Are you worried about puppy hair loss?

If your pups' coat is looking a little thin, or he's starting to develop bald spots, it's normal for you to be concerned.

But, there's no need to panic. Puppy hair loss is actually fairly common, and there can be several different causes for your little guys' thinning hair.

Keep reading to learn more about the most common reasons for canine hair loss and what to do about them!

Canine Allergies

Allergies are actually more common than most dog owners realize. They can develop allergic reactions to an ingredient (or several ingredients) in their food or treats. Quite often this is to a food that has been eaten, and well-tolerated, for some time, but it can also develop after your pup has been given something new or different.

Other common 'triggers' for canine allergy symptoms are fleas, seasonal allergens (such as pollen, weeds, dust etc.), some dogs also have 'contact allergies' which means they react to something they come in contact with. This could be a shampoo, topical medication, cleaning product, material or fibre and so on.

Regardless of what causes the allergy, the reaction is usually seen as a skin complaint. Canine hair loss, or bald spots are common, as are excessive licking or scratching (particularly of the belly, legs, tail or face), red irritated 'hot-spots' or a rash.

Dog Shedding

Most puppies lose their puppy coat when they're somewhere around 3 - 10 months old, depending on size, breed and coat type. This sort of puppy hair loss can be more extreme in some breeds than others, Pomeranians are a prime example of this, and may look very 'patchy' for a time.

Adult dogs shed seasonally, usually twice a year at the major change of seasons. This is often called 'blowing coat' and dog hair loss can be pretty dramatic at this time. Regular brushing and grooming is essential when this happens, to prevent tangles, mats and so on.

A female dog will also shed during their heat cycles, and more heavily after having puppies.

Excessive dog hair loss can also sometimes occur during times of extreme stress such as illness, a reaction to surgery, or other anxiety-inducing circumstances. Bathing your puppy too often, or with the wrong kind of products, can also cause thinning hair and dry, flaky skin.

Health Issues or Illness

There are quite a few illnesses or health conditions that can cause puppy hair loss. Some of them may be congenital, some may be contagious or a result of parasitic infestation. There are too many to list definitively here, but a few of the more common medical reasons for a dogs' hair loss include :

- **Cushings' Disease** - due to a dog's body producing too much Cortisol. Other symptoms may include recurrent infections, excessive thirst and urination, and weight gain.
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- **Hypothyroidism** - when a dogs' body produces too little thyroglobulin (a hormone). A dog suffering from hypothyroidism may also seem more lethargic than usual, gain weight, be susceptible to infection and have dry, brittle hair as well as patches of hair loss.
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- **Ringworm** - this is actually a fungal infection, rather than a parasitic one. Itching and hair loss, with scaly or crusty areas of skin, are the most common symptoms of Ringworm.
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- **Yeast Infections** - a yeast infection that is a fairly common cause of puppy hair loss. Moist areas are the most common places for this infection to show up (such as armpits, behind ears, and in skin folds). Dogs with a lot of 'wrinkles' such as English Bulldogs, Shar-Peis etc., are more susceptible to these sorts of infections. In addition to a dogs' hair loss, greasy skin and a strong odour are tell-tale signs that yeast is the problem.
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- **Mange** - this is a parasitic infection, caused by tiny 'mites', and there are two main types. Sarcoptic mange (also known as Scabies) and Demodectic mange. Demodectic mange is more common in young dogs and puppy hair loss associated with this is usually seen first on the muzzle/face, around the eyes or on the front legs. Mild itchiness may also be present. Some breeds such Shar-Peis and Bull Terrier breeds seem to be particularly liable to develop demodectic mange, especially if their immune system is stressed. With Sarcoptic mange a pup or dog will be extremely itchy and uncomfortable, and a dogs' hair loss can be fairly extensive as he may scratch himself very aggressively.

A skin scraping taken by your vet can determine which mite is causing the trouble.

So, if puppy hair loss is worrying you, and you're fairly sure it's not just a puppy 'blowing coat', it's best to take little Fido along to see your veterinarian. That way, any allergies or other health conditions can be diagnosed and treated quickly, which is always better (and less expensive) than taking a 'wait and see' approach.