

## Keeping the skin Healthy

This article is aimed at helping the Bloodhound owner keep their hound looking clean, tidy and in a healthy condition. Although in present day the Bloodhound has a relatively trouble free skin there are times when problems arise such as Canine atopy or Atopic dermatitis as it is more commonly known. Atopic dermatitis often begins in dogs aged between 1 and 3 years of age and is a common allergic skin disease which affects about 10 per cent of all dogs. It occurs with exposure to allergens that are inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Signs first appear at the same time as weed pollens around late summer and early autumn, then other pollens begin to influence the picture such as tree pollens, grass pollens and so on. If your hound is affected by pollens, a wipe down with a dampened towel when they come inside after exercise helps remove pollens picked up in the coat. Some hounds suffer from indoor allergies (house dust, mites etc..) so they may react all year round from the start. They may scratch at the ears, the underside of the body and the itching may cause the hound to rub its face against objects or lick at their paws. When it does progress, an itch-scratch-itch cycle develops with skin abrasions appearing and sometimes hair loss and secondary bacterial skin infections may develop if not treated. In time the skin can become thick and dark. If you need to apply lotion to a sore spot on your hound a good tip that I was given was to apply it just before you exercise, then the hound is distracted from scratching and licking, the blood circulates around more and the lotion has time to settle into the skin.

Colour or skin texture change may be a warning sign of several common metabolic or hormone problems and although most skin problems are not emergencies it is important to get a correct diagnosis from your vet as soon as possible so the condition can be treated. Demodectic and Sarcoptic Mange are difficult to diagnose without veterinary help. Once the cause has been identified most skin problems respond well to treatment. Listed below are some equipment and lotions which are readily available and have been used by experienced Bloodhound owners for general skin care to good effect.

### Common Equipment for Brushing & General Coat Cleaning

Coats should be free from dirt and debris and clean to the touch with no overpowering smell. Regular grooming will not only improve the appearance, condition and smell of your hound but will also alert you to any changes such as lumps and bumps, remembering to groom the underneath as well as the top. If you regularly walk in the countryside with your hound, check for ticks on your hound when you return. Tick removers can be obtained through general pet stores or the internet. It is important that ticks are removed safely (for the hound's sake) and the head is not left in the skin.

**Hound Glove or Natural Bristle Brush** – to remove dead hair and stimulate the skin

**Everyday rubber gloves** – removes loose hair easily/massages at same time

**Furminator (de-shedding tool)** – removal of dead coat

**Small Bristle brush** – ends of ears.

**Toothbrush x 2** -good for between toes for removing dried mud/also for teeth to prevent tartar build up, but you may be inclined to use a different one from the one used on the feet.

A piece of **silk or velvet or chamois leather** – for polishing on a special occasion

**Baby wipes** – unperfumed. Useful for general wiping of any area

## **Bathing**

**Mild Shampoo** – tea tree /oatmeal for sensitive skin(see below in Skin Treatments if your hound has a particular skin condition)

**Jug** – Hold the jug filled with water under the ear and immerse the whole ear flap into it.

**Sponge** – for ease in washing underneath areas

**Old Bath towels**

## **Skin First Aid Treatments**

**Yeast infected skin:**-Bathe in Malaseb (prescribed by your vet) - Canesten Cream applied to affected area (available from most chemists) for keeping on top of any mild re-occurrence.

**Mild Wet Eczema:**- Capritec cream (cetrimide/silver) available on internet – not sticky and easily absorbed

**Raw skin :-** Sudocrem – (antibacterial & antifungal) available from chemists.

**Cuts:**– clean with salt water or Hibiscrub or diluted Betadine

**Bruising/Swelling :-** cold compress i.e. wet bandage . Arnica cream applied to affected area

**Bee stings/Vegetation allergies:** – Piriton tablets , antihistamine tablets – adult dose for a full grown Bloodhound. Bathe in Bicarbonate of Soda diluted in a small amount of water. If the sting is in the mouth or throat more antihistamines can be given if the swelling is restricting the airway until you can reach the vet. Antihistamines control the symptoms and reactions but are not a cure.

**Wasp stings** - Vinegar can be applied to the sting area.

**Skin repair:**-Coconut Oil – applied to affected area or a teaspoon a day added to food. Coconut oil is antibacterial and helps healing and soothes skin. It is widely used to help many mild skin complaints and is easily available through the internet.

**Atopic Dermatitis:**- Imaverol (antimicrobial dip ). Diluted form is sponged on and then allowed to dry. It is available on the internet.

Surolan – is usually prescribed by the vet for use on ears but it is also good for itchy sore feet and promotes quick healing

Apple Cider Vinegar on meal – 1 tablespoon daily for a 40-50kg weight as a holistic remedy. It can also be used diluted 50/50 in a spray on areas of the skin which are particularly irritated.

After applying ointment/lotion to any itchy/sore area it is a good idea to take your hound out for a good walk. This takes their mind off the sore area and they can't start scratching or licking . It also helps the blood to circulate and lets the skin settle down.

## **Bedding**

Whatever you choose for bedding should be easy to clean and replaced when necessary. This will help your hound feel fresh,happy and relaxed. A popular choice is 'green-backed vet bedding'. This can be machine washed and dries quickly. It is not advisable to use bio washing powder, fabric softeners or deodorising sprays on bedding as these can cause bad reactions to your hounds skin. Plug in air fresheners should also be avoided as well as the use of strong cleaning chemicals such as Jeyes Fluid.

The above information is given as a guideline to help in everyday maintenance of the skin but if your hound has a chronic complaint or emergency treatment is needed then veterinary advice must be sought.

Sue Harrison

on behalf of the Bloodhound Health Group