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Skin & Coat Issues: Help for Itchy Pets

Itchy skin: it's a condition that plagues many dogs and cats while leaving owners scratching their heads and asking the questions, "What is this?" and "How do I make it stop?" Here at *The Wild* itchy skin conditions, demonstrated by excessive scratching, licking and shedding, is the #1 issue we see and address on a daily basis. The good news is, there *is* help! Most often, this issue can be addressed and resolved naturally with great results. This means you *don't* have to resort to expensive medications or monthly vet visits, heavily processed prescription foods with inappropriate ingredients for pets, or resign yourself or your pet to a life of daily discomfort and agitation.

In order to reverse this situation, we need to start by looking at the root cause. Most often, the ingredients in a pet's diet are the underlying issue. Many times, pet owners are told that their cat or dog has an allergy, either environmental or food-related, that is causing the issue. While this may in fact be a part of the issue, the cumulative ingredients in a pet's diet can work to either heal or exacerbate this issue. Often times, it is not an actual type of meat to which a pet is allergic, but rather a combination of species-inappropriate ingredients in their food that has been too heavily processed or highly heated to yield the proper amount of nutrients.

Dogs and cats are meant to eat fresh, raw meat due to their carnivorous nature. This means that their bodies are adapted to consume and absorb the nutrients from fresh prey (as they would hunt and consume it in the wild) in its raw form. They would eat the muscle meat, organs, some fur and hide, marrow, and even gnaw on the bones. Their digestive systems are built to defend against bacteria and to absorb all the nutrients they require, in the maximum amounts needed, by eating in this way. Even though our dogs and cats are domesticated versions of their wild ancestors, their biology remains fundamentally the same.

Unfortunately, many commercial pet foods are loaded with carbohydrates, along with various "fillers" (designed to make the food cheaper), and are cooked at high temperatures which then depletes the food of the vital nutrition found in any of the raw ingredients. Continued consumption of these difficult-to-digest and nutrient-poor foods can lead to inflammation throughout their internal systems and causes a whole host of issues for our pets, excessive scratching and itchiness being one of the most noticeable and commonly reported.

Another cause of itching is canine **Candida**, otherwise known as yeast, which is a fungus. This problem again leads us right back to food. Yeast naturally lives in our pet's gut, but by being given an over abundance of carbohydrates (which feeds the fungus), the yeast begins to multiply and express itself through the largest organ: the skin. Some common symptoms of this overgrowth are excessive chewing or licking of the feet and body, rusty-red hair between the toes, black skin, hair loss on the tail and upper back, a bad smell, ear infections or head shaking, greasy fur, diarrhea and seasonal allergies. When our pets show these symptoms, it is the body's way of telling us that something is imbalanced, or not right, inside. Antibiotics and other medications are usually prescribed for Candida issues. The problem with this is antibiotics wipe out the beneficial bacteria in the gut as well as the Candida which allows the cycle to continue. It is therefore important that we reestablish the healthy prebiotic and probiotic bacteria of the gut in order to stop the overgrowth of yeast long term.

If any or all of these symptoms sound familiar, we want you to know that there *is* hope and the solution may be far simpler than you realize, even if you have seemingly "tried everything." In our many years of experience, we have found time and time again that the simple switch to a species-appropriate diet for your dog or cat leads to a healthy, itch-free skin and coat, along with many other benefits, such as improved and stabilized digestive health, less shedding, stabilized behavior, cleaner teeth, fresher breath, improved joint health and mobility, and a strengthened immune system. We want our pets to lead their best and longest lives and one of the surest ways to achieve that is by feeding a nutrient-rich, species appropriate, high quality diet.

***This sheet is for basic technical information only. We encourage you to continue your own research on these subjects.**

How can I treat the underlying cause of skin issues for long term results?

1. **Healthy Diet** - The first thing we recommend to balance a pet's immune system is to make sure your pet is eating a high quality, balanced, and biologically appropriate diet. Eliminate as many starchy carbohydrates as possible.

➤ The best option for your dog or cat would be fresh, raw food, such as *Answers*, *Primal*, *K9 Kravings*, *Tucker's*, *Steve's* or *Stella & Chewy's*. After raw, we recommend a re-hydrated freeze-dried raw food, such as *Steve's*, *Primal*, *Stella & Chewy's* or *Open Farm*, or a gently cooked fresh food like *Open Farm's*. Lastly, we would recommend a low carbohydrate canned or dry food because excess carbs and starch (which are present in all dry foods to some degree), along with the lack of enzymes in these processed foods, can be a root cause of skin issues. We have many high quality canned foods to choose from along with a selection of dry foods that are based on high-quality, animal-based protein sources. Ask our associates if you would like help choosing one of these foods, or any combination of these options, for your pet's optimal health.

➤ Consider additional ways to increase the meat content and decrease the amount of starch they ingest. If feeding a dry food diet, a simple way to do this is by incorporating one of our many freeze-dried raw food toppers, as well as working in some raw food supplements such as the *Primal Sardine Toppers* and *K-9 Kravings Raw Beef Tripe* rolls. Make sure to keep the quality of treats you offer consistent with these foods as they, too, will either feed the healthy bacteria or the harmful bacteria in your pet's gut. To support your pet's immune system, we have a huge selection of natural and minimally processed treats and chews that your pets will not only enjoy but will supplement their healthy diet with vital nutrition.

➤ Don't be afraid to offer your pet different proteins and vegetables. Variety not only keeps pets interested in their food, but they will receive a wider variety of nutrients this way. Moisture, or water content, is highly important in the diet of dogs and especially cats which leads to many improvements throughout their entire body. Moisture-rich foods, such as raw foods and canned foods, along with consistent access to fresh, filtered water is essential for their health and well-being. Taking this well-rounded approach to nutrition will support a healthy, strong immune system thus resulting in beautiful skin and coats.

2. **Boost the Immune System & Restore the Beneficial Bacteria** - The introduction of probiotics, live enzymes and other nutrients from raw goat's and cow's milk, such as *Primal Raw Goat's Milk*, *Steve's ChiaFreeze Goat's Milk Yogurt* and *Answers Raw Fermented Goat's Milk* or *Cow's Kefir*, are a delicious way to boost your pet's nutrition and immune system. Shelf stable probiotics such as *Nature's Farmacy Digestive Enhancer* or *Probiotic Max*, *Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes* or *Ark Naturals Gentle Digest* are all good options as well. The gut feeds their entire immune system, so if this is fed properly, then the skin and coat issues are usually among the first things to improve.

3. **Destroy the Candida** - Add some Organic Unrefined Coconut Oil or *Animal Essentials' Super Immune* tincture to your pet's food. Both of these have anti-fungal, anti-viral and anti-bacterial effects. To administer coconut oil, start slow and work up to the recommended dose (1 tsp for every 10 pounds of body weight or 1 tbsp for every 30 pounds). Provide plenty of fresh, filtered water for your pet to help flush out toxins.

➤ Because of coconut oil's medicinal properties it can also be used externally to disinfect cuts. It has been shown to clear up rashes and skin infections as well as deodorize pets and enhance skin and coat health. It makes an effective, natural remedy for dry or cracked paws and snouts. Try our own *Be Wild Paw Balm* for this topical relief treatment which includes coconut oil for this purpose.

➤ Not all coconut oil is created equally. Unrefined or virgin coconut oil, meaning it is raw and has not been heated to change the helpful properties, is what should be used if you are looking to use coconut oil for its therapeutic benefits. Good quality coconut oil should be colorless when liquid and pure white when solid.

Keep in mind this is a process. Some pets will show improvements overnight while others may take weeks or months. Things may get worse before they get better because the body is ridding itself of toxins. We encourage you to stay the course and ask *The Wild* associates about any questions or concerns you may have.

<https://www.OnlyNaturalPet.com/blogs/holistic-healthcare-library/all-about-raw-food-for-dogs-and-cats>
<https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/itchy-dog-yeast-infection/>