

# Identifying Healthy and Unhealthy Skin in Dogs



## WHY IS SKIN IMPORTANT TO DOG HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

- It is the largest organ of the body.
- It acts as a physical barrier to protect the body from the environment.
- Skin problems may be the first sign of disease in other parts of the body.



No redness or hair loss around the eyes or on the muzzle.



This ear is clean, inside and out; there is no redness, inflammation, or discharge.



There is no missing or patchy hair on this dog. It is thick and covers the whole body. There is no redness on the skin.



The abdomen (stomach) of this dog shows no redness or inflammation. The hair covers the abdomen and inner thighs.



This paw has no hair loss, redness, or swelling.

### HEALTHY SKIN

is free of dandruff, scabs, bumps, and pustules.  
The hair coat will be intact (no bald spots), shiny, and mat-free.

### UNHEALTHY SKIN

may have dandruff, scabs, bumps, scales, and/or pustules.  
The hair coat may have missing fur or be dull, dry, and/or matted.

Note the redness and hair loss around the eyes and on the muzzle.



Note the redness and inflammation of the earflap and the yellowish, crusty discharge.



Note the patchy, missing hair on this dog. The exposed skin is red and scaly.



The abdomen (stomach) of this dog shows red, inflamed spots.



This paw has hair loss, inflammation, and redness between the toes and on top of the paw.



Many skin diseases have similar symptoms. If you see abnormal skin, even if it looks like something you have seen before, it is important to **consult with your veterinarian** for proper diagnosis and treatment.

This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about skin issues in dogs. Refer to the other topics in the series for more information on skin, feet, and ear care.

Questions? Email us at [CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov](mailto:CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov)

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