
Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

Ear, Coat and Skin Care**GRRoW Hotline: 888-655-4753**

Ear, Coat and Skin Care

By Ron Beatty, DVM

Some of the most common canine problems I see are related to skin, ears, and coat. Many of these problems often involve infections and can be prevented with routine care.

General recommendations: Foremost, you must feed a good quality diet—you are what you eat whether you are a person *or dog*. Stay away from canned foods because they tend to stick to the teeth rapidly causing buildup of plaque and tartar. Use a high quality dry kibble diet. Check the bag chart for a suggested volume of food in a day. In addition, remember that many companies offer multiple lines of food. For example, Purina Dog/Puppy Chow is a good middle-of-the-road food. However, Purina One or Purina Pro Plan is their best. Iams is a good food while Eukanuba made by the same company is their best. There are many great quality dry foods. Some of my recommendations are the best ones noted above, Nutro Premium foods, Fromm Four Star, Canidae, to name only a few. In my opinion, Ol Roy, Alpo and Spout are some of the worst foods you can feed your dog.

Ears: There seems to be some kind of magnetic field that draws retrievers to the water. Is your dog an avid swimmer? If so, his ears require special maintenance because the wetness predisposes his ears to infections. There is a swimmer's astringent that I recommend for swimmers called Vet Solutions Swimmer's Astringent. This product chemically dries the water away. It should be used at the end of the swimming day—apply a squirt of product to each ear and a message each ear base. Avid human swimmers also use similar products to prevent ear infections caused by chronic wetness. Please buy a quality ear cleaner from your vet. An eight ounce bottle of cleaner at the vet is only about ten dollars—*no more expensive than the pet store*. Unfortunately, the pet supply store shelves are littered with worthless products. Some of the junk products burn sensitive ears and are simply not effective. Do not make homemade products with alcohol or vinegar. Nothing matches the efficacy of a good veterinary cleaner.

Healthy non-swimming dogs should have their ears cleaned once a month. Dogs with allergies should have their ears cleaned once weekly or so. All dogs should have their ears cleaned after baths. Have a vet or veterinary nurse show you how to properly clean canine ears. It is not difficult, but must be done correctly.

A healthy dog ear only has a little yellow or golden ear wax, just like your ear. So, if you are cleaning out volumes of carnally brown discharge from your dog's ears he has an ear infection—call your vet. Infections that continue on for months to years often cause hearing loss and permanent ear damage.

A special note for allergy ears: Talk to your vet to come up a real plan that works if you constantly battle your dog's ear infections. I manage these dogs with topical cortisone to prevent yeast infections driven by allergies. Believe it or not, these dogs do not need frequent ear cleanings or visit to see me if their ears are managed well.

Skin & Haircoat: Dogs that swim in lakes and rivers should at least be rinsed with clean cool hose water at the end of the day. It would be more ideal to bath them with oatmeal and aloe dog shampoo. No matter how clean the lake or river looks to you, it probably contains algae or storm sewer runoff that can irritate skin if it is left on to dry. When the weekend is over at the cottage, definitely bath your dog with oatmeal and aloe shampoo. Never use a human product or one with antibacterial or antifungal ingredient—unless prescribed for your allergy dog by your vet. The general rule of thumb is not to bathe your dog more than every two weeks or you will dry out his skin and haircoat.

I'm typically not a big believer in food supplements for dogs because a great quality dry food has everything they need. However, Derm Caps and 3V Caps are some exceptions. They are fish oil based products and come in a gel caps or a pump dispenser. They contain a special balance of omega 3 & 6 fatty acids and vitamin E. I mention these products because they are the best in my opinion and that of some veterinary dermatologists, as well. Generics do not work as well in my experience. Unfortunately, many people still use vegetable oils are not really effective. Finally, Avid swimmers and allergy dogs should get these *everyday!* They dramatically improve skin and coat health—after a few weeks of use, the skin and coat often become as soft as silk. Also, their skin can readily rehydrate itself after swimming and bathing.

An ounce of prevention is worth a trip to the veterinarian. So, take a little time on a regular basis to care for your companion. He will be healthier and you will probably save money.

About Dr. Beatty:

Dr. Beatty graduated from the University of Wisconsin Madison [School of Veterinary Medicine](#) in 2001. Veterinary school is just as difficult to enter and is equally as challenging as medical school. He focused on exotic pets as well as cats and dogs. In order to properly care for pets his education never stops. Dr. Beatty regularly attends [continuing education](#) events so he can learn new medical and surgical skills to benefit our patients.

Since graduation he has worked in the greater Milwaukee area. He enjoys seeing all companion animals-dogs, cats, birds, reptiles, rabbits, ferrets, chinchillas, guinea pigs, sugar gliders and other small mammals. His clients especially appreciate his gentle nature with their pets. Dr. Beatty is still amazed by the deep bond that people share with pets. One of his greatest joys in life is to care for animals.

In his free time, Dr. Beatty enjoys gardening, home handyman projects, going to the Menomonee Falls dog park, and reading.



*Dr. Ron Beatty cares for Golden Retrievers at
My Pet's Vet in Mequon, Wisconsin.
www.MyPetsVetMequon.com*