

PICKING THE RIGHT PRODUCT FOR RESULTS

If you were suffering from a cold, would you take a birth control pill to treat the symptoms? Sounds ridiculous, however, often we do a similar thing by reaching for the wrong product in our grooming salons. We assume that because the product does a decent job of cleaning, has a pleasant smell, or feels good that it is the solution to all of our problems. For example, when people on Facebook mention that they have an itchy dog, others will chime in recommending their favorite shampoo. Shampoo is made to clean and strip sebum not hydrate or soothe. In fact, because shampoos are drying in nature, they are often the source of the issue to begin with. Shampoos can be mild, but that doesn't mean that they address the problem at hand. Itching (pruritus) is a factor of inflammation and/or dry skin. To relieve itching we need to be thinking about using a good hydrating conditioner and possibly even an anti-inflammatory.

When dealing with issues outside the ordinary, we need to take a scientific approach. Using the example above when we are talking about an itchy dog we need to think through the problem and use the right technique and products to accomplish the task. We need to analyze all of the possible reasons. The most common issues that cause itchiness in a dog are allergies, parasites, dry skin, and several other diseases or conditions. All of these should be approached in a different manner and none of them will have great resolution with just a shampoo. Some may even need veterinary involvement for resolution. One common denominator in all of these conditions is good conditioning is needed to return the skin back to normal health (replace the sebum).

We often think our routine shampoo serves multiple functions which may or may not be true. Most shampoos in a concentrated form do kill fleas but they don't work as efficiently for ticks and mites. Shampoos are meant to clean not to disinfect or kill bacteria, yeast, or fungus. We do get a false sense on this issue because by diluting down the number of bacteria and yeast/fungus, we often see a short-term benefit (Solution to Pollution is Dilution). In many cases the infection returns as soon as we stop the frequent baths because the shampoo did not actually kill the bacteria or yeast/fungus. For best results, we need to pick shampoos that are designed for the specific problem at hand and then follow them with a quality conditioner. A good conditioner will feed, hydrate, and replenish the nutrients and trace minerals that have been lost in the disease process.

Your technique also matters. If you are dealing with a pet that is super greasy or producing a lot of skin debris and you use a degreasing product, you may exacerbate the issue. The reason many of these animals produce grease and skin debris is they have some form of irritation. The body is producing grease to try to alleviate the irritation (not very effective in most cases). If we degrease the animal that is trying to compensate without addressing the underlying problem, often we will send their body into shock causing it to over-produce to make up for the loss. A much better approach is to condition first (oils break down oils) which allows us to break down the top layer (or layers) of the oil. Then we use an appropriate mild shampoo that doesn't strip all the sebum away. It is very important to replace the hydration and oils in a final conditioning stage to relieve some if not all the irritation. This is a much healthier approach which will calm the body versus sending it into shock.

Another example of getting lost in what a product is capable of doing is when we try to use an oil to “hydrate the skin”. If we break that down, in order to hydrate, we have to add water. Oil and water don’t mix so how do we hydrate with an oil? When we use oils we can moisturize, which means we put a layer of oil or fats (emollient conditioners as an example) over the skin which holds moisture in, but it does not “add water”. So, if you start off dry and put on a barrier (fats or oils) over the top you are still dry. If you truly want to hydrate the skin and hair you need to consider a conditioner with a good humectant. The oils do play a significant role once the skin is hydrated. It protects the skin from further dehydration, but oils by themselves do not hydrate.

ONE DEFINITION:

“Hydration” is the absorption of moisture from the air or through humectants and then infusing your cells with water to improve your skin’s ability to absorb moisture and nutrients.

“Moisturizing” is about trapping and locking in the moisture to build your skin’s natural protective barrier. This will prevent any water loss and ensure that your skin remains soft and smooth

Whenever we have issues out of the routine bathing scenario, we need to think through the problem to get the best resolution. In other words, treat with intention versus just doing the routine and hoping for good results. The approach may even include a veterinarian because there are many skin issues that are coming from internal factors, therefore, “ANY” product used topically is not going to resolve the problem. There isn’t a product out there that cures hypothyroid or Cushing’s disease by a topical method. We can do a lot to bring the skin and hair back to normal, but it will be a constant battle because the body will be working against you. In summary, if you want resolution to problems, pick products and techniques that are designed to solve the given issue versus just using your favorite product and no I don’t recommend birth control for a cold!