

## SEBACEOUS ADENITIS

The world is constantly changing and never ceases to surprise me. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that we would go from pure bred dogs being the most popular to designer mixes taking over. In years gone by, we would refer to a doodle as a mistake, a mutt, or Heinz 57 and you would not be able to charge for them, but now they are the fad and one of the most sought after “breeds”. With this doodle trend, we often get some very unique hair types and of course, the skin issues to go with them. One of these issues that we need to be aware of is sebaceous adenitis.

In the past, we considered sebaceous adenitis mainly to be a problem with Poodles and Akitas, but we are finding that it is also showing up in our Poodle crosses. Sebaceous adenitis is a disease that manifests when the sebaceous glands that produce sebum or the oils of the skin stop working. It is a disease we recognize, but still don’t understand well. Some believe that it is an auto-immune disease where the body attacks itself, causing the glands to shut down. Others believe that it may be an inherited disease. Even though there are aspects that could be consistent with either, neither one has been proven a 100%. What we do know is that it’s a terrible condition and many of our dogs deal with it often being undiagnosed or falsely diagnosed as allergies. It is only diagnosed by a biopsy where you see the scar tissue that has replaced the normal glands.

Realizing that the sebaceous glands no longer function means in order to give these dogs relief, we as the groomers or care takers have to replace all the elements that are typically produced in the sebum (nutrition, water, and protection for the skin). In the past, (and sometimes still) the standard treatment recommended by veterinarians was to apply baby oil or mineral oil over the dog’s whole body, leave on from 1-5 hours, then wash with a dish soap or a stripping/degreasing shampoo to remove all the oil. If you understand the science, you would realize that baby oil and mineral oil are petroleum based and not compatible with the oils of the body. The theory is the same as any emollient type conditioner which holds the moisture of the body in (does not hydrate). If you start out dry, you cannot gain with an emollient and any positive effect you might have will be negated with the harsh shampoo or degreaser. In my whole career, I have never seen a dog grow hair back with this technique. Not to mention that it needs to be done weekly. Many of these dogs are euthanized, because the owners are not willing to go through the process with lack of results.

More recently, the veterinary community has taken a different approach and now often treats these dogs with cyclosporine which is an immune-suppressive drug. The thought is following the theory that this is an inflammatory issue. This is a little easier technique and is better tolerated, but still falls short in many ways. Unfortunately, even with reducing the inflammation, the glands are still not producing sebum. I have heard of dogs growing hair back in some cases with cyclosporine, however, I have not taken this approach because of the limited results. Another aspect is that the problem tends to reoccur with this treatment, which often frustrates the client.

I prefer to apply the science in the approach to this disease. First, no one believes that the glands will grow back or go back to functioning normally, therefore, we approach this as a lifetime maintenance issue not something that has a cure. If we know the skin is not producing sebum then we have to function for it. So we need to use oils and conditioners that will hydrate (humectants), are nutritional rich, and provide the natural oil barriers to prevent secondary infection. We will also use shampoos and conditioners that stimulate and provide a good environment for the hair to grow. Initially, it is a lot of work to get the skin

straightened out, but when done correctly it is fairly easy to maintain. You cannot let this go too far without care or the dryness and lack of nutrients and protection will allow it to return.

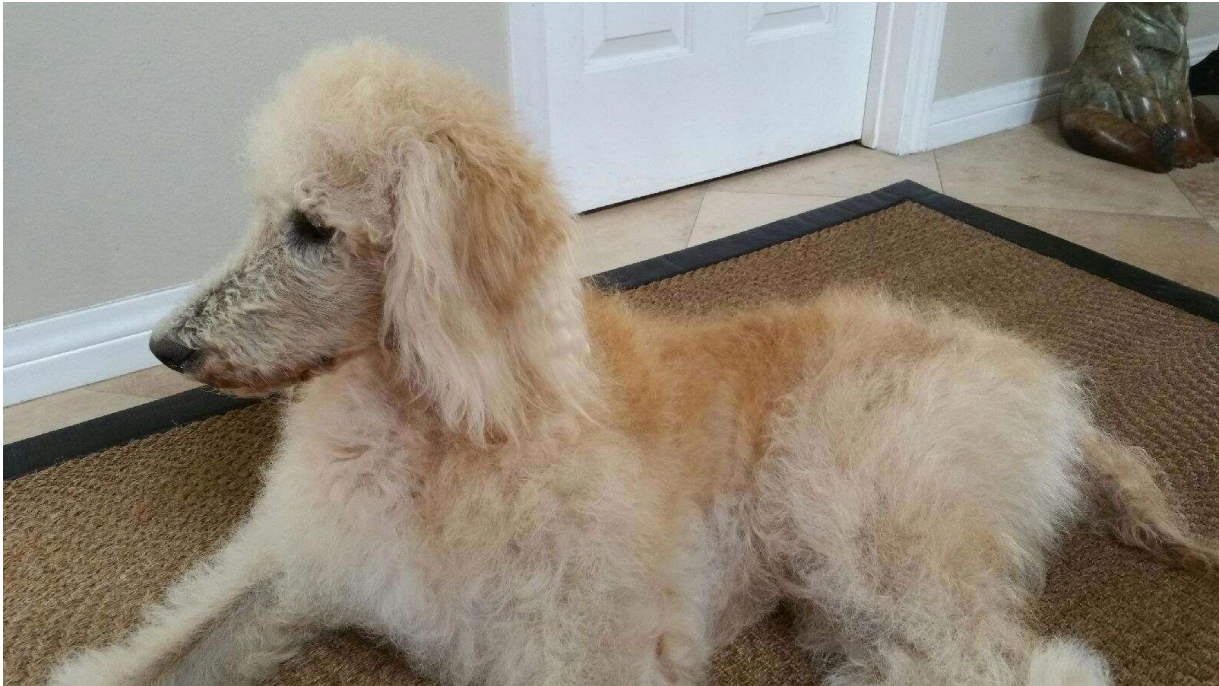
Below is an example of a case of sebaceous adenitis. Notice the demeanor of the dog. Severely depressed and visibly miserable because of the dry, itchy skin.



Typically, the texture of the hair gets very wiry. The skin is very dry and flakey, also a low grade to severe infection may be present.



By replacing the sebum with products to hydrate, nourish, and protect, the hair will start growing back in most cases. It will appear very rough until the skin becomes healthier with the supplementation.



With continued care, the hair quality will improve and start to appear more normal. This is the first trim (below) at around 4 months. As you can see, we still have a color change on this white Poodle and the hair is still fairly wiry but improving.



Below is the appearance after finally growing out 100% (other than the tail). The dog has not looked back or had any setbacks in the process.



It is important to note that this was all done by the client. There were no veterinary drugs used in the process. So as a groomer, this is definitely a disease that you are capable of managing if you understand the science and use the correct technique and products. Consistency is the key. Look at the change in the demeanor of the dog as the process progressed. This was a life worth saving and you can be the one to do it!