Odor a Problem? Tips on Controlling Odor from the Skin & Ears

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Body odor can usually be traced to one of three causes: oily skin, bacteria or yeast present on the skin, or the dog rolled in something that has a foul odor.

Whatever the cause, the best way to control body odor is with more frequent bathing. Finding the shampoo that works best with your dog will go a long way to keeping 'doggy odors' under control.

Oily hair coat

The skin of some pets produce excess oils, which can accumulate on the skin and become rancid. Most common in Cocker and Springer Spaniels, this condition is called primary seborrhea and is evidenced by yellowish-brown scales particularly at the elbows, hocks, and around the ears.

Use a shampoo recommended by your veterinarian. Let the shampoo work for 10 minutes before rinsing. Do not wash too frequently as oil glands will increase their output the more often you bathe your pet.

Bacteria or yeast build-up

Bacterial skin diseases are more prevalent in certain dogs, and with bacteria often comes odor. Yeast infections of the skin can also cause odor. Keeping your pet's skin free of bacteria and yeast can help prevent many skin conditions that lead to itching, hot spots, hair loss, and other disorders.

Anti-bacterial shampoos, particularly those with a deodorizing agent added can help control odor from bacteria. These formulations have ingredients that kill the skin bacteria that is not washed away during rinsing. Residual action keeps coats smelling fresher, longer.

Anti-fungal shampoos such as those containing miconazole help to control yeast infections on the skin. Vinegar rinses with equal parts of vinegar and water can also help control yeast, though some people complain their dog now smells like a pickle.

Dogs that love dirt

We have all seen dogs that just cannot resist rolling in the most foul-smelling matter they can find - from dead fish to animal droppings, to who-knows-what. While we may not understand this behavior, some dogs seem to simply prefer a more odoriferous fragrance.

Since you will likely be bathing your dog more often, we would recommend a gentle herbal shampoo with conditioner. You may also want to try a fragrance-free hypoallergenic shampoo in case your pet is trying to cover up the fragrance you have selected with his choice of 'natural perfumes.'

Other odor tips

- Keep the ears clean. Ear infections almost always have a bad smell and are relatively common in drop-eared dogs. Weekly cleaning will help prevent infections.
- Increase brushing frequency. Regular brushing will help remove odor-causing material from the hair, as well as the oils which can lead to odor.
- Odor from the anal area could signify an anal gland problem. These glands may need to be 'expressed' or emptied. Please contact your veterinarian.
- Odors can also result from infections in the mouth, intestinal gas and stomach gas. If you are not sure of where the odor may be coming from, have your dog checked by your veterinarian.

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