Cat Shampoos: The Function of Common Ingredients

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Many shampoos have been developed to treat a variety of skin conditions in cats and dogs. Understanding the function of the various ingredients may appear daunting. The following table should help you understand why certain ingredients are included in a shampoo. This information can help you, with consultation from your veterinarian, select the right one for your pet's skin condition.

INGREDIENTS	COMMENTS
INSECTICIDALS	**For treatment and prevention of fleas, ticks, and some types of mange**
Pyrethrin	
Pyrethroids, such as permethrin	DO NOT USE ON CATS
Carbaryl	Good if sensitive to pyrethrin
ANTISEBORRHEIC	**For removal and prevention of scales, and in some cases to remove excess oils**
For seborrhea oleosa	Characterized by scales and excess oils
Sulfur	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Reduces itching Works best when used with an equal concentration of salicylic acid
Salicylic acid	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Reduces itching Antibacterial Works best when used with an equal concentration of sulfur
Refined Tar	Most potent ingredient to reduce scale production Reduces itching Degreases Can be irritating DO NOT USE ON CATS
Selenium sulfide	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Degreases Can be irritating to scrotum and mucous

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	membranes Best to limit its use to yeast infections and severe oiliness Must leave on at least 10 minutes for antifungal activity DO NOT USE ON CATS
Benzoyl peroxide	Removes scale and crust Can dry out the skin Excellent degreaser, and flushes out hair follicles Antibacterial
For seborrhea sicca	Characterized by dry scales
Sulfur	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Reduces itching Works best when used with an equal concentration of salicylic acid
Salicylic acid	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Reduces itching Antibacterial Works best when used with an equal concentration of sulfur
ANTIPRURITIC	**For relief of itching due to conditions such as atopy and other allergies**
Colloidal Oatmeal	Reduces inflammation
Hydrocortisone	Produces minimal side effects when compared to oral steroids
Aloe vera	
Pramoxine hydrochloride	Topical anesthetic
Diphenhydramine	Antihistamine which decreases inflammation
Menthol	Has cooling and anesthetic effect

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Sulfur	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Reduces itching Works best when used with an equal concentration of salicylic acid
Salicylic acid	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Reduces itching Antibacterial Works best when used with an equal concentration of sulfur
Cool water rinses	
ANTIBACTERIALS	**For treatment of bacterial infections such as pyoderma, folliculitis, and impetigo**
Benzoyl Peroxide	Removes scale and crust Can dry out the skin Excellent degreaser, and flushes out hair follicles Antibacterial
Chlorhexidine	Higher concentrations may be irritating or dry out the skin in some animals
Povidone Iodine	
Triclosan	Low potency
Ethyl Lactate	Flushes follicles, has some degreasing activity
Sulfur	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Reduces itching Works best when used with an equal concentration of salicylic acid Can help prevent Staph infection
ANTIFUNGALS	**For treatment of ringworm and yeast infections**
Miconazole 2%	Less expensive than ketoconazole

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Chlorhexidine 2-4%	Some activity against yeast, less against ringworm Higher concentrations may be irritating or dry out the skin in some animals
Povidone Iodine	Not as effective, can cause irritation
Ketoconazole 2%	Highly effective
Selenium sulfide 1%	Removes scale and crust, and reduces scale production Antibacterial and antifungal Degreases Can be irritating to scrotum and mucous membranes Best to limit its use to yeast infections and severe oiliness Must leave on at least 10 minutes for antifungal activity DO NOT USE ON CATS
EMOLLIENTS	**Add oils to skin**
Almond Oil	
Corn Oil	
Cottonseed Oil	
Coconut Oil	
Olive Oil	
Peanut Oil	
Persia Oil	
Safflower Oil	
Sesame Oil	
Lanolin	
Mineral Oil	
Paraffin	
EMULSIFIERS	**Help distribute emollients**
Cetyl Alcohol	
Laureth-5	

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Lecithin	
PEG-4 dilaurate	
Stearic acid	
Stearyl alcohol	
HUMECTANTS	**Rehydrate skin**
Carboxylic Acid	
Lactic Acid	
Urea	
Sodium Lactate	
Propylene Glycol	
Glycerin	
Polyvinylpyrrolidone	
SPECIAL FORMULATIONS	**Microscopic particles which can be made to contain a number of ingredients; they adhere to the skin and hair and slowly release their contents**
Novosomes®	Release contents over 7-10 days
Spherulites®	Release contents over 8 days

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