

# Hair Loss in Cats

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ADULT CAT EDITION



Cats 1–8 Years Old

**HAIR LOSS IN CATS**  
Is the cat itchy?  
Is the cat overgrooming?

**Yes**

1 Woods Lamp and DTM culture (or PCR)  
2 Skin scraping and treatment of ectoparasites

**No / Not Sure**

**Demodex gatoi**  
1 Treat patient and all feline housemates  
2 Continue treatment for 8 weeks or longer until all clinical signs resolve

**Fleas**  
1 Treat patient and all pets in the home  
2 Continue preventatives year round

**Notoedres cati, Cheyletiella spp., Otodectes cynotis, other ectoparasites**  
1 Treat patient and all pets in the home  
2 Continue preventatives year round

**Dermatophytosis**  
1 Treat until hair coat is normal  
2 Treat until 2 negative follow up tests 2 - 4 weeks apart

DTM Negative and there is no response to treatment of ectoparasites.  
Consider congenital alopecia or follicular dysplasia if present for most or all of animal's life.  
If this condition is recent in onset consider the following:

**The patient is not better with treatment**  
1 Was treatment long enough?  
2 Was the owner compliant?  
3 Is there another condition present?

The skin condition is facially centered (may have excoriations, crusts, and alopecia)  
**Differentials:**  
A - B - D - E - H

There is overgrooming without crusts or sores  
**Differentials:**  
A - B - C - F - G

1 Miliary dermatitis  
2 Eosinophilic granuloma  
3 Eosinophilic plaques  
4 Indolent ulcer  
5 Head and neck pruritus  
**Differentials:**  
A - B - E (Miliary dermatitis)

Crusting and hair loss with or without excoriations on face and other body areas  
**Differentials:**  
A - B - D - E - H

**Diabetes Mellitus - Common endocrinopathy in the cat**  
1 Bacterial pyoderma  
2 Thin skin and alopecia  
3 Dry seborrhea  
4 May have prior history of steroid use for allergies or IBD  
5 Diagnose with routine complete blood work and urinalysis

**Thymoma associated exfoliative dermatitis - Rare in adult cats**  
1 Marked large scale and flaking on most body areas  
2 Hair coat may be unkempt  
3 Skin may be thickened with or without erythema  
4 Malassezia overgrowth may cause pruritus, otherwise not typically itchy  
Skin lesions are typically seen before clinical signs associated with mediastinal mass  
Presumptive diagnosis with mediastinal mass and skin histopathology findings

**A Food allergies - Common in adult cats**  
(especially those with concurrent gastrointestinal signs vomiting, diarrhea, hyporexia)  
1 Hydrolyzed or novel protein diet for 8 - 12 weeks  
2 Treatment of infection with topical / systemic antimicrobials  
3 Severe itch can be treated with steroids at the beginning of the food trial

**C Discomfort / pain related - Uncommon to rare in adult cats**  
1 Bladder or abdominal pain may lead to overgrooming of the ventral abdomen

**D Herpes virus dermatitis - Uncommon in adult cats**  
1 Facially centered dermatitis. The bridge of the nose, nasal planum, and periocular region may have crust, erythema, and erosion  
2 There may be a concurrent or historical upper respiratory infection  
3 Diagnosis via biopsy  
4 Treatment may include stress reduction, discontinuation of immunosuppressive medications, and antivirals

**E Pemphigus foliaceus - Uncommon in adult cats**  
1 Pruritus can vary from non-existent to extreme  
2 Yellow crusting, erythema, and hair loss  
3 May involve the concave pinna, nose, bridge of nose, and face  
4 May involve mammary papilla  
5 May involve any area of haired skin  
6 Paw pad scaling / crusting and nail bed discharge - Typically this is yellow in color and may be the only feature  
7 Diagnosis via biopsy

**G Hyperthyroidism - Uncommon in adult cats**  
1 Hyperthyroid cats may have poor dry or greasy hair coats with matting  
2 Some cats with hyperthyroidism may overgroom the trunk  
3 Claw growth may be increased  
4 Total T4 levels can be used as initial screening

**B Non-flea, non-food hypersensitivity dermatitis - Common in adult cats**  
1 Consider short course of steroids if treatment of food allergies was not helpful  
2 Consider Atopica® if indoor  
3 Consider allergy testing followed by immunotherapy in cats with clinical signs more than 4 months per year  
4 Consider off-label Apoquel® if other options are not effective

**F Behavioral - Uncommon to rare in adult cats**  
1 Behavioral causes of overgrooming is overall uncommon to rare in the cat  
2 It can appear identical to overgrooming caused by Demodex gatoi, food allergy, and environmental allergy

**H Mosquito bite hypersensitivity - Uncommon in adult cats.**  
1 Most common in cats with outdoor access in summer time in Southern United States (and Mediterranean region).  
2 Crusting and pruritus on the bridge of nose, nasal planum, and paw pads  
3 Treatment involves bringing cat indoors and using steroids for initial pruritus