

# Superficial Bacterial Folliculitis in Dogs

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## BASIC INFORMATION

### Description

Folliculitis is a bacterial skin infection that leads to hair loss and inflammation of the hair follicles.

### Causes

Common bacteria associated with folliculitis include *Staphylococcus* species, occasionally *Streptococcus* species, and others. Infections have a tendency arise in the presence of several abnormalities:

- Skin problems: allergy, seborrhea, excessive moisture
- Hormonal disorders: low thyroid levels, Cushing's disease with high cortisol levels, diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes)
- Immunologic abnormalities
- Drugs given or applied to the pet that make the skin more susceptible to the bacteria

### Clinical Signs

Circular areas of hair loss occur. Pimples and red bumps are usually seen, along with scabs, sometimes moist skin, and increased pigmentation. In inflamed areas, hair pulls out very easily. Sometimes after the lesions heal, there is a blackened circle that disappears over time. These lesions can occur anywhere on the body, but involvement of the head, ears, or feet is unusual.

### Diagnostic Tests

Identification of bacteria and certain white blood cells (neutrophils) is often possible when a direct impression sample is made onto

a glass slide and examined under the microscope. Occasionally a biopsy of the skin is necessary to make the diagnosis and to rule out other skin problems with similar appearances. Bacterial culture and antibiotic susceptibility testing may be needed to determine the best antibiotic for treatment. Laboratory testing to identify underlying causes may also be needed.

## TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

### Treatment Options

Oral antibiotics are given for at least 3 weeks and occasionally for 4-6 weeks. Shampoo therapy is helpful to both remove the scabs and decrease the surface bacteria so that they cannot re-invade the skin. Any underlying or associated conditions should also be controlled.

### Follow-up Care

The infection is treated for at least 1 week after all clinical signs resolve, so recheck visits are often needed prior to stopping the medications.

### Prognosis

Prognosis is very good for a cure if the correct antibiotic is chosen and therapy is continued for a long enough time. Use of cortisone or steroids during this time makes the antibiotic treatment much less effective. Relapses can occur until the underlying cause is properly treated or managed or if the initial bacterial infection is resistant to the antibiotic.