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Information for Clients

## **CYCLICAL FLANK ALOPECIA**

### **Introduction**

Cyclical Flank Alopecia is an uncommon disorder characterized by alopecia (hair loss) and altered hair quality over the trunk and flank area of dogs. “Cyclical” refers to the sometimes seasonal or reoccurring nature of the hair loss and regrowth. This disorder is cosmetic in nature and does not at all adversely affect the quality of life of the patient. There is strong breed predisposition for this disorder: Boxers, Bulldog breeds, Airedales, Schnauzers, Staffordshire terriers and several other breeds have all been reported.

### **Clinical Signs**

Hair loss is the main feature of Cyclical Flank Alopecia although altered hair coat quality or simply a change in texture may also be noted. The hair loss pattern can be very distinctive. Often the hair loss is described as “geographic” as the alopecia is complete and very well demarcated so as to resemble a continent on a map. The areas of hair loss may be bilaterally symmetric (the same on both sides of the body.) The skin in this area will often become dark, but not inflamed.

### **Diagnosis**

To get a confirmed diagnosis a skin biopsy must be performed. However, as this is a benign disorder, if the patient has no other signs of illness then a diagnosis based on clinical presentation may be made. In the event that the area of hair loss continues to enlarge or other clinical signs appear, (itching, rash, changes in behavior or habits) then a skin biopsy and possible other diagnostic tests will be warranted.

### **Treatment**

There is no reliable therapy to treat cyclical flank alopecia. There has been some success using melatonin, but results are variable. If the alopecia is extensive, then a dog t-shirt or sweater may be helpful. The cyclic nature of this disorder means that the hair may spontaneously grow back at any time. In some cases the hair loss/regrowth is seasonal; in other cases it comes and goes randomly. Often there is partial hair regrowth in one area with hair loss in another. Although an obvious change in your dog’s appearance, this is a cosmetic disorder and not a health risk to your dog.