

Alopecia X

Other names for this disease include: (*Adrenal Sex Hormone Imbalance, Follicular Dysfunction of Plush-coated Breeds, Adrenal Hyperplasia-like Syndrome, Growth Hormone/ Castration Responsive Dermatoses, Adult-onset Hyposomatotropism, Pseudo-Cushing's Disease*)

Alopecia X is an uncommon skin condition where animals exhibit areas of alopecia (hair loss) and hyperpigmentation. No specific etiology for this condition has been determined. One theory is that the condition is caused by a lack of growth hormone (hyposomatotropism), however, this theory is not valid as many cases do not respond to growth hormone therapy. Another theory suggests that the condition may be due to abnormalities in hormone receptors of the hair follicle.



Breeds predisposed are Pomeranians, Chow Chows, Keeshonds, Samoyeds, Alaskan Malamutes, Siberian Huskies, and Miniature Poodles.

Most animals are affected between 1 and 2 years of age but older animals may also be affected. There is no sex predilection. The condition can occur before or after spaying and neutering. Clinical symptoms include symmetrical areas of alopecia of the trunk, thighs, and neck. The

entire trunk may eventually be affected sparing the head and limbs. Initially, the primary hairs are lost followed by the secondary hairs. Animals that are clipped may not re-grow hair. Paradoxically, some cases exhibit hair re-growth after biopsy or trauma to an affected area. Affected areas may also become hyperpigmented with occasional secondary seborrhea and superficial bacterial infection.

Diagnosis of Alopecia X is based on history, physical examination, and by ruling out other endocrinopathies and follicular dysplasias. A blood and chemistry panel in addition to other appropriate tests should be performed to rule out hypothyroidism, hyperadrenocorticism, and other endocrine disorders.

Since there is no specific etiology for this condition many therapies have been tried but none are effective in all cases. Alopecia X does not affect the animal's health as the condition is solely cosmetic. Thus, foregoing treatment in these cases is a reasonable option. Neutering affected animals may help re-grow hair in 75% of cases but also may be temporary. Administration of the supplement melatonin has resulted in hair re-growth in 30% of cases within 3-4 months. Several other treatments have been advocated, including: oral trilostane, mitotane, growth hormone, and methyltestosterone.