

Feline Paraneoplastic Alopecia

DEFINITION

Feline paraneoplastic alopecia is a syndrome of hair loss that is a marker for underlying internal malignancy.

ETIOLOGY AND PATHOGENESIS

The condition is generally associated with a pancreatic adenocarcinoma but also, in small numbers of cases, has been reported in association with bile duct carcinoma.

CLINICAL FEATURES

The syndrome occurs in older cats. Alopecia first appears on the ventral abdomen, thorax, and legs and then may generalize. Occasionally the pinna and periorbital regions may also be affected. Hair adjacent to the advancing alopecia epilates easily. The alopecic skin has a characteristic smooth, shiny, glistening appearance. It is thin and inelastic but not fragile³. The footpads may be affected with translucent scale often arranged in translucent rings³. Excessive grooming and secondary *Malassezia* dermatitis may also develop. Concurrent signs of underlying neoplasia include anorexia, weight loss, and lethargy.



DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSES

- Psychogenic alopecia
- Mural folliculitis
- Demodicosis
- Hyperadrenocorticism
- Telogen defluxion

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

History and clinical findings are distinctive

- Dermatohistopathology is supportive
- Radiology, ultrasonography or exploratory laparotomy to confirm neoplasia

MANAGEMENT

Complete surgical excision of the internal malignancy is curative. However, in the majority of cases tumor metastasis has occurred by the time diagnosis is made and therefore prognosis is poor. Recurrence of the alopecia indicates metastatic disease and relapse.

KEY POINT

- A condition with distinctive alopecic, smooth, shiny skin, that is due to internal malignancy, and has a poor prognosis.