

Veterinary Fact Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions – Skin, hair and nails

This fact sheet discusses the care of and common ailments affecting greyhound skin, hair and nails.

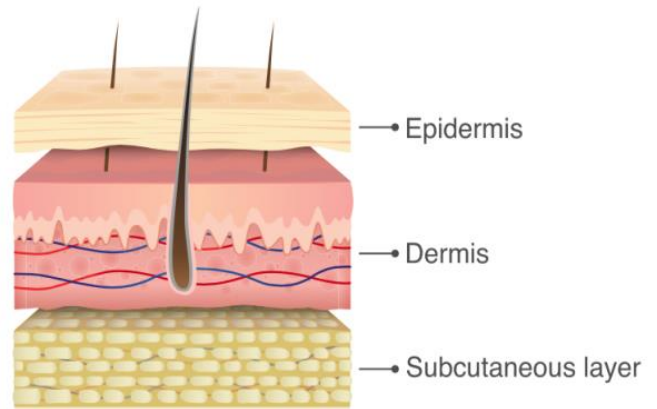
What does skin do?

Skin is the largest organ in the body. It forms a protective barrier against foreign substances and infectious organisms, helps to regulate body temperature, and detects and relays sensory information such as heat, cold, touch and pain.

What is skin made of?

Skin is made up of three layers:

1. **Epidermis:** the outer layer. New skin cells are made at the bottom of this layer and move towards the surface where they form a compact coating of dead skin cells. These dead skin cells are continuously shed from the surface layer and replaced from cells from below.
2. **Dermis:** the middle layer. This is made of collagen and elastic tissue. There are blood vessels and nerves which are important to supply the epidermis (outer layer) with nutrients, regulate temperature and provide touch sensation. “Hair roots” are also held within this layer.
3. **Subcutis:** the deepest layer. It contains subcutaneous fat and muscle.



The three layers of the skin
Royalty-free stock vector ID: 1141301618

Hair growth is affected by genetics, nutrition, hormones, and the time of year. Certain drugs and disease can also affect how hair grows. A greyhound’s hair coat is a protective layer and helps conserve heat. Skin also contains “sebaceous glands”, which secrete sebum, an oily substance, into the skin and hair coat. Nails grow out from the epidermis.

Why does my greyhound have dandruff?

Just like in humans, dandruff appears as flaky white speckles of dead skin. It can occur when there is a dysregulation (a disruption of the normal process) of the skin’s oil production, so you may notice that your greyhound’s skin underneath its coat is quite oily. The skin may also appear irritated and cause your greyhound to itch.

A number of factors can contribute to the development of dandruff, including genetics, environment, nutrition and parasites. It is recommended to rule out parasites (such as mites and fleas) as a cause of dandruff and/or treat for these before looking further into why your greyhound may have dandruff. Your veterinarian will be able to do a “skin scrape” to check for mites and yeast on the skin surface.

In terms of diet, ensuring your greyhound has sufficient levels of fatty acids, especially omega-3 is important. A greyhound cannot produce either omega-3 or omega-6 in its body, so these fatty acids

must be included in the diet. Good sources of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are meat fat (chicken especially), fish oils and vegetable oils. Most good quality commercial dry dog foods will have sufficient levels of these fatty acids. Cod-liver oil or fish oil may be used as a supplement, but discuss this with your veterinarian first. Ensuring your greyhound is getting a good quality, highly digestible protein source is also important. Vitamin A and Vitamin C promote skin health and regulate sebum (oil) production. More information about providing your greyhound with an optimally balanced diet can be found in the Nutrition FAQ published on the General Alerts page on FastTrack¹.

Changes in environment, especially extremes in temperature or low humidity can alter oil production and lead to dandruff. If possible, regulate your kennels to a comfortable and constant temperature and humidity level.

Regular grooming can help to manage dandruff – by brushing your greyhounds regularly, you loosen and remove the dead skin and spread the body's natural oils over the surface of the skin. A bath once or twice a month is usually sufficient for most dogs to maintain a healthy skin and coat, but be sure to use a canine specific shampoo and conditioner and use good massage technique to wash the entire dog. Washing more than once a fortnight risks stripping the skin and coat of essential oils which can cause skin irritation and problems.

Never use human skin products, as dogs have a different skin pH (acidity level) to humans, and even baby shampoo can irritate a greyhound's skin. For greyhounds with more sensitive skin the use of natural oatmeal-based products can be beneficial. There are certain canine specific shampoos to help reduce dandruff; these will usually be available from your veterinarian. Residual shampoo can cause irritation so once shampooed, thoroughly rinsing for several minutes ensures no shampoo is left, as well as helping to maintain skin moisture. Application of a conditioner reduces the static electricity of the hair which in turn repels dust and dirt from attaching, while also closing the scales on the individual hair shaft to promote a shiny coat and retain skin moisture and minimise drying of the skin.

Because skin cells have to grow out from the bottom layer in the epidermis, it can take several weeks before you notice an improvement in your greyhound's coat. Even if you are doing all the right things, some greyhounds will be prone to developing dandruff. Speak to your veterinarian if you are concerned about the condition of your greyhound's skin and coat.

Why does my greyhound have bald thighs?

Bald thigh syndrome is a common hair loss disorder in greyhounds. Hair loss is usually seen on the sides and back of both thighs, but it can extend to the belly and chest. The baldness may wax and wane over time; while you may see some improvement, complete resolution is unlikely. Bald thigh syndrome does not cause irritation of the skin or itchiness; and is not associated with any signs of illness. Males and females can both be affected. Bald thigh syndrome should not be confused with hair loss due to insufficient bedding, lying on concrete, or rubbing against objects. There is no irritation or abrasion of the skin surface associated with the bald thighs. Your veterinarian will be able to rule out other causes of baldness including parasitism, trauma or bacterial skin infection.

Specialised examination of canine skin and hair has demonstrated that affected dogs do not have normally formed hair shafts (the part of the hair extending from outside of the root and above the skin). These abnormalities are associated with a change in the genes responsible for determining how hair shafts should be structured. The reason for this genetic change is unclear; there is a likely hereditary link, but this needs further investigation. Stress of a training programme has been hypothesised as a contributing factor but has not yet been proven.

There is no definitive evidence from studies to show that hormone disorders, including those of the thyroid (i.e. hypothyroidism) and adrenal gland, are responsible. On examination, the thyroid glands

¹<https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/frequently%20asked%20questions%20-%20nutritionc0ba5957-6c3f-4163-8979-028fff3ca0a7.pdf>

and adrenal glands appear relatively normal in affected greyhounds. Even though many greyhounds appear to have low thyroxine (Total T4) on a blood test compared to the normal reference ranges used, studies have shown that healthy greyhounds, with no signs of hypothyroid disease, have lower T4 levels than other breeds; yet they have normal TSH levels, which is a more accurate test.⁴

Research papers and publications pertaining to bald thigh syndrome and thyroid levels in greyhounds include:

- Brunner *et al.* (2019). Bald thigh syndrome in sighthounds— Revisiting the cause of a well-known disease.²
- Schoning & Cowan (2000). Bald thigh syndrome of Greyhound dogs: gross and microscopic findings.³
- Shiel *et al.* (2007). Thyroid hormone concentrations in young, healthy, pretraining greyhounds.⁴

Hormonal treatment should only ever be considered based on advice and prescription from your veterinarian. Note that according to the Rules, corticotropins, including adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) and tetracosactrin (tetracosactide) are *permanently banned prohibited substances* and must never be possessed, administered or detected, including in an Out of Competition Test. Other substances capable of causing an effect on the endocrine system (hormone) are also *prohibited substances* in race day samples.

Why is my greyhound itchy?

Itchy greyhounds may scratch, chew, lick or rub excessively. The skin may appear red and irritated, sometimes with areas of hair loss or the development of pimple-like spots, a rash or sores.

A common reason a greyhound may be itchy is from a parasitic infestation. Parasites include fleas, mites that cause mange or scabies, lice and ticks. Fleas are the most common external parasite and can be recognised as live fleas visible to the naked eye or as “flea dirt”, which are small black pepper-like flakes in the fur. Fleas can most often be found on the inner thighs, belly and lower back around the base of the tail. Further information about managing external parasites, such as fleas, in your greyhounds can be found in the “External Parasites FAQ”⁵.

Other reasons your greyhound may appear itchy include:

- other infections: fungal (e.g. ringworm) or bacterial
- allergies to the environment, food or agents in contact with the skin (see Veterinary Fact Sheet - Allergic/Atopic Skin Disease)
- dry skin
- boredom or anxiety

A contact allergy is a skin rash caused by a material or substance, called an allergen, that is in contact with the skin. Greyhounds may be allergic to certain creams or lotions.



Contact skin allergy

If your greyhound is excessively itchy, even after you have treated it for parasites, or you notice a rash or sores, it is recommended that you discuss this with your veterinarian. Remember antiparasitic treatments, approved and registered for the use on canines, with the exception of Levamisole and its metabolites, are exempted substances and will not lead to a positive swab for prohibited substances. It is recommended that you administer antiparasitic treatment regularly to your greyhound.

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6386255/pdf/pone.0212645.pdf>

³ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1046/j.1365-3164.2000.00175.x>

⁴ <https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/vetrec/161/18/616.full.pdf>

⁵ <https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/external%20parasites%20faqs1739ee4c-2681-4f00-a59d-318189b3db7f.pdf>

What is a “hotspot”?

A hotspot is a localised superficial skin infection. Normal skin bacteria can cause infection following damage to the skin, often caused by physical trauma (licking, scratching, chewing, etc). A hotspot will appear as a circular lesion which is red, moist and itchy. There may be a small amount of pus/discharge, or crusting. The area will often be sensitive or sore to the touch. Greyhounds may make this worse by scratching or biting at the area.



A hotspot is a localised skin infection

If the hotspot is small and relatively mild, you can clip the fur over the area with clippers, allowing air to reach to wound and access to apply topical medication. Keep the area clean with a topical antiseptic (such as betadine) and use an antibiotic ointment provided or approved by your veterinarian. Discourage your greyhound from licking or irritating the wound. Severe cases, or hotspots which do not respond to treatment at home, should be seen by your veterinarian who may prescribe further medication.

Be aware, that while treatment with antibiotics will not lead to a positive swab, many topical medications contain a low dose of a corticosteroid or lignocaine (a local anaesthetic). Corticosteroids and local anaesthetics are prohibited substances under the Rules of Racing and subject to a withdrawal time. You are advised to check the active ingredients or discuss with your veterinarian before using any topical cream or ointment.

What should I do if my greyhound has a skin wound?

Skin wounds are most often caused by trauma, and if left untreated can become infected. Grossly dirty wounds should be cleaned with sterile saline (or at minimum clean water) before applying a topical antiseptic, such as betadine, and/or a topical antibacterial wound spray. Many of the wound sprays contain a pink or purple dye to help ensure that the whole wound has been covered. They have an antibacterial action and often also contain an insect repellent, which will reduce the risk of fly-strike developing.

Further information about managing skin wounds in greyhounds can be found on the General Alerts Page⁶ and the Greyhound Care and Standards website⁷. In general, you should always seek veterinary attention if there are one or more of the following:

- significant bleeding or discharge
- the size of the wound is greater than a 50-cent coin
- the depth of the wound is one or more muscle layer
- if the tissue around the wound is darkened
- if the wound is contaminated
- if the wound is painful to touch
- if bone or ligament is exposed
- if located over a highly mobile area such as an elbow, toe or tail

⁶<https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/wounds%20faqs%20published%2031%20may%202018096bb8bc-acaf-4438-835e-4555a2ccae65853c3939-3edd-43f6-b883-573dbbed01e1.pdf>

⁷ https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Welfare_Fact_Sheets_2019_Wounds.pdf

What is a bruise?



Bruising following a muscle tear

Following trauma, it is not unusual for **bruising** and/or **swelling** to develop. Bruising occurs when small blood vessels near the skin's surface break following an impact such as a fall or other injury. You may also notice bruising (+/- swelling) following a muscular tear (e.g. of the back muscle or monkey muscle). Applying ice three times per day for period of 10 minutes over the first 24-48 hours can help minimise bruising and swelling. Your veterinarian can make a diagnosis as to the nature of the injury and rule out any more significant injury (such as broken bones, torn ligaments, or major muscle tears). If you are concerned about excessive bruising, you should consult with your veterinarian.

What are chemical burns or rashes?

A chemical burn is an injury to the skin caused by contact with a corrosive substance. There may be blistering or ulceration of the skin; or a rash may develop as a milder symptom following application of an irritant substance directly to the skin. Chemical burns, also known as caustic burns, can be very painful and are susceptible to secondary infection.

Several practices such as using certain embrocation agents, topical liniments or blistering agents, can cause chemical burns and unnecessary pain and suffering to a greyhound. There is no current scientific evidence to support the use of these products and the use of any substance causing a chemical burn is not consistent with current welfare standards. Disinfectants used as cleaning agents for inanimate objects (e.g. surface cleaners) should not be used on greyhound skin as they can cause chemical burns.

If you have applied a product to your greyhound and accidentally caused a chemical burn or rash, you should consult with your veterinarian.

What is "happy tail"?

Vigorous tail wagging, especially in the kennel or a confined space, can cause direct and repeated trauma to the end of a greyhound's tail.

A one-off injury may lead to bleeding from the tail tip. Keeping the tail tip clean with betadine or another antiseptic, placing a light dressing and changing it at least every 48 hours until it has healed is usually sufficient in these cases.

Over time, repeated injury can lead the tail tip to bleed frequently, become swollen, and in some cases infected. The skin may appear dark or discoloured and scaly. In advanced cases, unchecked progression will lead to death of the tail tip; sometimes you will be able to see one of the tail bones, or part of the tail will fall off. Some cases require surgical removal of part of the tail by your veterinarian. For more information including when to seek advice from your veterinarian, see the "Tail Tip Trauma / 'Happy Tail'" FAQ⁸.



"Happy tail" in a greyhound

⁸[https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/happy%20tail%20faqs%20published%2031%20may%202018870309a5-20ee-496a-930a-5374293f007c%20\(1\)c524da45-454f-4757-a687-2c9e0edf452c.pdf](https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/happy%20tail%20faqs%20published%2031%20may%202018870309a5-20ee-496a-930a-5374293f007c%20(1)c524da45-454f-4757-a687-2c9e0edf452c.pdf)

What conditions may affect the skin of my greyhound's ears?

- **Chilblains** are similar to “frostbite”. They can develop on the edges of a greyhound's ears under cold and icy weather conditions. Constriction of blood vessels in the extremities in response to cold reduces blood flow to the ears. This leads to devitalisation and death of the skin and underlying cartilage. Signs in order of increasing severity include hair loss, drying, cracking, weeping and ulceration of the skin. The condition can be uncomfortable and painful, so greyhounds may rub or scratch at their ears. Avoid chilblains by protecting greyhounds from the wind, keeping them indoors and ensuring kennels are well insulated. You can protect your greyhound's ears by keeping them covered (with a sock for example) when out in the yards. Ulcerated ear tips can be treated with topical antibiotic creams. See your veterinarian for further advice.



Chilblains in a greyhound

- **Fly bites:** especially in the summer months, fly bites may cause trauma, leading to bleeding and the development of scabs on the ends of your greyhounds' ears. Make sure the tips of the ears are kept clean and use appropriate fly and pest control on your property if required.
- **Ear infections:** skin covers the inside of the ear canal. Inflammation of the ear canal is called otitis externa, which is often associated with a yeast or bacterial infection. Risk factors include allergic skin conditions, changes in external environmental temperature and humidity, and frequent swimming, however greyhounds are less prone than other canine breeds. You will need to see your veterinarian to diagnose the underlying condition and determine the appropriate treatment. Topical ear medications are commonly prescribed.

What lumps and bumps should I be concerned about?

Lumps and bumps on the skin can be caused by a variety of different conditions. Whilst they are more common in older dogs, younger dogs can also develop lumps. Many lumps are benign, meaning they are non-cancerous (e.g. abscesses, warts, most fatty lumps, abscesses, cysts). If they are irritating to your greyhound or in an awkward spot, they may need to be removed. Some lumps can be malignant (cancerous). Others may initially be benign but can develop over time into malignancies.

Some examples of tumours in greyhounds include:

- **Sebaceous cysts** (sebaceous gland tumours) are usually benign growths that arise from the sebaceous glands (the glands producing skin oils). They usually appear as round, hairless nodules on the surface of the skin. They sometimes can become infected and ooze a yellow substance or bleed.
- **Haemangiomas** (benign) and **cutaneous haemangiosarcomas** (malignant) are vascular tumours for which repeated sun exposure is a major risk factor. Haemangiomas usually appear as a small slightly raised or flat “blood-blisters”. A cutaneous haemangiosarcoma may occur spontaneously or progress from a haemangioma. They are aggressive and malignant tumours that often appear as red, ulcerated nodules on the skin surface. Haemangiosarcomas can also affect the internal organs such as the liver and spleen.
- **Histiocytomas** are benign growths that occur most commonly in young dogs and often resolve spontaneously. They usually present as small, hairless, raised and sometimes red lumps which develop very quickly.
- **Mast cell tumours** vary widely in both appearance and behaviour (how aggressive they are). They may be smooth, bumpy or ulcerated, or sometimes have a cauliflower-like appearance.

They can also become itchy, red or irritated. Surgical removal is usually recommended as in some cases they can spread to internal organs.

It is impossible to tell for certain just from looking at a lump whether it is benign or malignant. If you notice a lump on your greyhound, it is best to consult with your veterinarian who will be able to perform tests to make a diagnosis and provide treatment options. Any lumps that bruise, bleed, grow rapidly, become ulcerated, are painful, or are associated with signs of illness (such as weight loss, inappetence, lethargy, etc) should be seen by your veterinarian.



A greyhound with an elbow hygroma

Finally, it is also not uncommon for greyhounds to develop **elbow hygromas**. These are fluid-filled swellings that occurs over the elbow joint (or any bony prominence or pressure point). Initially they may be small, soft, and moveable, but over time the mass can get quite large and feel hard. They form as a result of lying on hard surfaces, such as concrete, which causes repeated but minor trauma to the skin over the elbow. This leads to an inflammatory response in which the body produces fluid to cushion the joint.

A hygroma itself is usually not painful but it may ulcerate and become infected, which is painful. Providing soft bedding or adding padding to relieve the pressure may help to prevent further growth and aid in resolution. It is better to address hygromas early before they cause an issue. Seek advice from your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

What is Alabama Rot?

Cutaneous and renal glomerular vasculopathy (CRGV), also known as Alabama rot, is a rare and often fatal disease without a known cause. It is associated with skin lesions and acute kidney disease. The skin lesions may vary in size and appearance but are often dark in colour and/or ulcerated, developing on the limbs or around the face. Skin lesions usually appear before symptoms of kidney disease (increased thirst and urination and generalised signs of lethargy and inappetence). It is recommended that any unusual skin lesions are investigated by your veterinarian, but it is important to remember that most skin ulcers will not be caused by CRGV.

How can I cut and care for my greyhound's nails and what is the ideal nail length?

Most greyhounds will wear down their nails naturally and will need little care. But if your greyhound has unusual nail wear, or is on soft surfaces most of the time, you may have to trim the greyhound's nails to ensure that they do not "catch" during running or cause problems. A nail which catches may pull or cause injury to the associated ligaments or toe. Long, untrimmed nails can also affect a greyhound's stance, resulting in extra force being applied to the joints and ligaments in its feet and legs. This, in turn, can make a greyhound more vulnerable to injury.

At the ideal nail length, you should be able to slide a playing card under the nails of the greyhound's feet when it is standing on a flat surface.



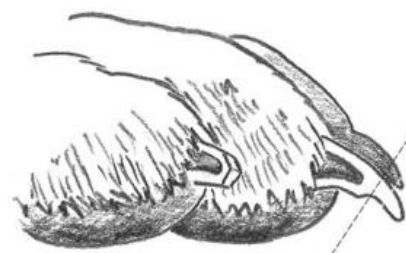
A greyhound with a torn nail and exposed quick (left) that requires attention and a greyhound with a 'dropped toe' (right) that requires its nail trimmed (line) to reduce unnecessary forces applying on the affected toe.



A good set of nail clippers is an essential tool in a trainer's kit. There are different styles of nail clippers available, including scissor-action clippers and guillotine-action types. A greyhound's toenail consists of a living 'quick' and a hard outer material called the shell.

The quick supplies blood to the nail and runs through the core of it. The shell grows down over the quick and extends past it. Knowing where the quick ends is essential to ensure that you do not cut it by accident. Cutting the quick will cause pain and bleeding.

To locate the quick, have a look at the toenails and try to find a white nail. Usually the quick can be seen through the white nail as a pink area. Any trimming should be done to end below the lowest point of the quick. Trimming the nails of a greyhound can be tricky if it has black nails. If there are no white nails, the safest thing is to do is to turn the nail upside down and have a look at the underside of the nail. Usually you can see the nail extending past a central core area, and you can trim this section of the nail away quite safely. Another way to check that you are cutting the nail at a safe place is to press with nail clippers at the planned level with moderate force (enough to squeeze the nail, but not enough to cut). If you are too high up the nail, pressure on the quick will cause your greyhound to pull its foot away as a reflex. If you are below the quick, your greyhound should not react.



As you approach the central core, you can nip small amounts off at a time until you are happy you have trimmed enough. It is always better to come back in a week and trim off a little more, than to cut into the quick and cause pain and bleeding.

Some trainers choose to use a small file instead of nail clippers. Filing the nails back can be an alternative to using clippers and is a quite efficient way to keep nails short. The downside to this method is that it is possible to create a lot of heat in the nail bed which can damage the sensitive tissue, and it is possible to file the nail too far back, exposing the quick. Filing can help reshape nails that grow unevenly, or those associated with toes that have been damaged (such as 'sprung' toes) and where the nail no longer curls towards the ground.

Dew claws do not bear weight, so they need to be trimmed more frequently. Dew claws can easily get caught, especially in some dogs, and are they are more susceptible to breaking.

What conditions may affect my greyhound's feet and ability to race?

There are a number of reasons that a greyhound's toe may appear puffy, sore and red, including problems with the skin or nail. It is important that you check your greyhounds' feet regularly, including between the toes and around the nailbed. Reasons for a swollen toe include, but are not limited to:

- **Sand toe** is inflammation or infection of the nail bed. Paronychia is the scientific term for a nail bed infection. This is often caused by nails and toes digging into the sand when running. Swelling around the nail bed may be associated with



A greyhound with mild sand toe of the middle toes (arrows)

a small amount of pus or blood, and/or pain. You may notice reddening and inflammation of the skin around the nail. It is important to keep affected toes clean by bathing in an antiseptic wash such as betadine daily. After cleaning, you can apply an antiseptic cream. In severe cases or where you do not see an improvement within 2-3 days of treating at home, consult your veterinarian. Antibiotics may be prescribed and should be given on direction of your vet.

To prevent recurrence, you can place a thin (2-3 mm wide) strip of tape around the nail close to the nail bed to stop sand rubbing between the nail and nail bed. Ensure the nail is clean and dry, and free from oil or dirt that may irritate the skin.



A greyhound affected by severe sand toe

- **Foreign bodies and grass seeds** – in the pads, in the webbing between the toes, or under the skin. Grass seeds are common, but shards of glass, gravel and other foreign objects can penetrate and work their way through the skin, then migrate up the foot or the limb, creating a sinus tract. If the foreign body is in the pad, you may notice that your greyhound is lame on hard surfaces and will be painful if you squeeze the pad. Foreign bodies may cause swellings at the site of skin penetration or further up the sinus tract. These swellings may ooze pus or blood. Your greyhound may require surgery by your veterinarian to remove the foreign object.

Note that grass seeds do not only affect the feet and limbs, and they can penetrate through any aspect of the skin including the trunk, under the tail, or groin. Grass seeds can migrate through the body, causing infection as they track. In rare cases, they may even be able to enter the abdomen or thoracic cavity. Greyhounds may also inhale grass seeds, which can lead to a chest infection. More information about grass seeds can be found on the Greyhound Care and Standards website⁹. It is important to check your greyhound regularly and remove grass seeds promptly.

- **Broken (fractured) toes** will often cause swelling and pain to your greyhound. Your greyhound may limp or hold up its paw. Fractures may be open (with a wound communicating to the external environment) or closed (no skin wound). If you suspect your greyhound may have broken a toe, see your veterinarian who may take x-rays to confirm the diagnosis.

Other conditions affecting your greyhounds feet include:

- **Sand burns** are abrasions in the webbings or on the bottom of the foot caused by running on sand tracks. Small sand burns should be cleaned with an antiseptic, such as betadine. If they are very deep, painful or have discharge, you should scratch your greyhound and seek advice from your veterinarian.



Sand burn on the bottom of a greyhound's foot

⁹ <https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/health-and-well-being/grass-seeds/>

- **Split webbings** occur when the fibrous webbing between the toes breaks down. They can be small wounds (1-2 mm long) or much larger (2-3 cm long). Split webbings can take a long time to heal. Small splits may be treated conservatively with antiseptics and bandaging – healing time is usually 2-3 weeks. Larger splits may heal better and more quickly if they are stitched by your veterinarian in a U-shaped pattern. This will leave a permanent split but the edges of the skin on each side of the split will heal together. Antibiotics may be required. Sutures will be removed after 10-14 days and dogs may return to racing about 10-14 days after stitch removal. It is important not to return your greyhound to racing too early, otherwise the split may get worse.



Split webbing

- **Warts (infectious papillomas)** are mostly found between the digits or at the edge of a footpad and usually appear as a small “cauliflower” type growth. They often occur in young dogs and can be painful as they grow or if they are knocked. They are caused by a viral infection and are very contagious. Greyhounds with warts should be scratched from races. You can seek advice from your veterinarian; if the wart is not easily removable, your veterinarian will usually be able to do so under local anaesthetic.



Infectious papilloma, or warts, often appear on the feet/toes

- **Corns** are focal circular area of thickened and hardened skin, which develop on the main or toe pad of a greyhound’s foot. They can cause lameness when a greyhound walks, especially on a hard surface. Corns will require treatment from your veterinarian – depending on the severity and nature of the corn, different options are available. More information about corns can be found on the Greyhound Care and Standards website¹⁰.



Corns are found on the pads

- **Symmetrical Lupoid Onychodystrophy** is an immune-mediated condition, which may be hereditary, and causes flaking and breakage of nails, with abnormal nail formation (short, brittle, and misshapen). It usually will affect more than one nail. Secondary bacterial infection may cause swelling and pain around the nail bed, digits may be swollen, and the greyhound may be lame. If you are concerned about the conditions of your greyhound’s nails, see your veterinarian for further diagnostic and treatment options.



SLO affects multiple nails

¹⁰ <https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/health-and-well-being/corns/#know>

- **Torn dew claws or torn nails** can be very painful for your greyhound. Your greyhound may yelp, become suddenly lame or hold up its foot. If your greyhound has torn a nail and it is bleeding, wrap the site and apply pressure. You could also apply a silver nitrate stick or cauterizing powder to stop the bleeding.

Split nails if short can be filed back. Longer splits may require veterinary attention to remove under anaesthetic. Large splits can allow infection to ascend upwards into the toe joints so should not be ignored.

Nails may also tear and, in some cases, the whole nail may be lost, leaving just the quick exposed. In other cases, part or all of the nail will still be attached. These should be removed, trimmed above the break or filed to remove the damaged portion and allow the nail to regrow normally. If the torn nail is loosely attached, you may be able to trim this away at home. Otherwise, your veterinarian can remove it; this can be painful but once removed, provides a lot of relief.



What medications can I use for treating skin conditions?

Treatment will vary depending on the skin condition. Veterinary treatment should always be given under the recommendations and guidance of your veterinarian. Betadine and other topical antiseptics can be used safely and will not lead to a positive swab.

Certain topical ointments and creams contain anti-inflammatory agents, such as corticosteroids, or local anaesthetics, such as lignocaine, so risk a positive swab – it is recommended that you check with your veterinarian before administering them.

Oral corticosteroids are prohibited substances; they may be prescribed by your veterinarian for certain allergic skin conditions and should not be given without consultation with your veterinarian. Be aware that greyhounds are sensitive to corticosteroids and side-effects including polydipsia and polyuria (increased thirst and urination) are common.

Antibiotics should only be given on advice from your veterinarian. Oral antibiotics will not lead to a positive swab, but the condition necessitating antibiotic treatment may imply that your greyhound is not fit to race.

As per GAR 145, race day and day prior treatment restrictions apply, in addition to standard rules regarding presenting your greyhound free of prohibited substances.

For further advice on this topic, contact GRV Veterinary Services - vets@grv.org.au