

Why Does My Pet Shed So Much?

by [Dr. Hinson](#) on June 17, 2009

Hair grows from tiny roots called follicles. Hair follicles contain both a long individual strand of hair (primary hair) and multiple short, fine hairs (secondary hairs). The process of shedding in cats and dogs occurs because each individual hair goes through a growth cycle and is then released. After release, it is replaced with a new hair and the process repeats.



In pets, many factors can affect shedding. Most commonly we think of the effect of day length and temperature on coats. Shorter days and cooler temperatures stimulate the follicles and result in a thicker coat. Conversely, longer days and warmer temperatures lead to increased shedding with the cycle peaking around mid-summer.

Many of our pets today live inside throughout the year, and they are not subjected to a variety of temperature or light changes. Instead of experiencing a large difference between the highest and lowest times of shedding, these cats and dogs tend to shed at a consistently high level year round. This pattern of coat turnover requires more attention through the entire year instead of only during peak shedding times.

One key in the management of shedding is good grooming. Many groomers offer shedding treatments that help reduce hair turnover for a period of time. Frequent trips to the groomer for routine bathing and brushing will help remove hairs in the final stage of the growth cycle and lessen the amount that is shed into the pet's environment. In between grooming visits, brushing at home also helps.

On the nutrition front, the goal is to provide the nutrients necessary to keep the hair as healthy as possible and prevent premature hair separation. Hair growth may demand 30% of total protein intake, so an adequate amount of high level protein is important. Certain B vitamins like biotin and folic acid play a role in the formation of hair. Key minerals and fatty acids also help nourish the coat. A deficiency in any of these essential nutrients can result in poor coat quality, excess shedding, and slower hair re-growth.

--*Dr. Hinson*

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