



## Companion Animal Behavioural Services Creating Contentment From Knowledge And Kindness

[www.companionanimalbehaviouralservices.co.uk](http://www.companionanimalbehaviouralservices.co.uk)

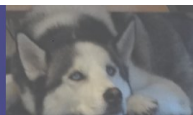
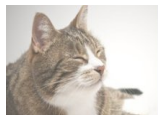
# OVERGROOMING IN CATS



Cats are superb groomers and, unless inhibited by infirmity or illness, will usually keep themselves clean. Long-haired cats will need regular grooming and you may need to get help from your vet if your cat is prone to furballs.

Over-grooming occurs when cats groom so much that they remove all the hair and expose their skin. Over-grooming can occur on any part of the body that the cat can lick, although it is seen commonly on the belly, inside of the hind legs, the legs, front and back and across the flank. Patches often appear symmetrically on both sides of the body.

Cats may progress to biting and chewing the exposed areas which can then become infected and can even result in tail amputation. The remaining damaged hair feels spiky. This is different from alopecia when hair falls out but leaves the remaining hair soft.



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### Common Causes

The most common causes of over-grooming are pain and skin problems. It is also thought that stress can play a rôle when grooming becomes a displacement behaviour that gets out of control. Oriental breeds seem more prone to stress-related over-grooming and hair plucking. The area of damage may provide a clue as to the underlying cause.

Pain caused by lower urinary tract disease, which is common in cats, may result in over-grooming on the lower belly, the inside of its thighs and around the genitals.

Flea-allergic dermatitis which is provided by a reaction to flea saliva from just a single flea can also cause irritation and promote over-grooming. Food allergies may also create irritation with a similar effect.

Less commonly, feline hyperaesthesia syndrome may present as skin twitching and sudden bouts of intense grooming and self-mutilation, often of the hind feet and tail.

### Solutions

It can be extremely difficult to interrupt over-grooming as it has an element of compulsion. It is essential to keep up to date with parasite treatments - including treating the environment when fleas have been detected.

Monitor your cat for any signs of food allergies or pain and seek veterinary help as soon as possible. Behavioural support should be sought if the over-grooming includes a stress-related component.

**Contact Companion Animal Behavioural Services at  
[info@dogsnet.org](mailto:info@dogsnet.org) for more help**

