

## Cat Dandruff

**Find out what causes dry, flaky skin in cats.**

**Q:** My black cat, Pia, is an indoor cat and has a very shiny coat. She is groomed on a regular basis, but I notice that she has an excessive amount of dandruff on her back toward her tail. Her coat is thick and I have tried looking for an area of dry skin, but do not find any. It seems to clear for a while and then returns, becoming very heavy. I feed her a well-balanced cat food. What is causing the dandruff?

**A:** The lower back and the base of the tail are common areas for dry, flaky skin to develop in some cats. Cats that are overweight will often develop greasy, flaky skin in that area simply because they are too overweight and inflexible to groom themselves properly. You didn't mention your cat's body condition, so I don't know if this is part of the problem.

Occasionally, cats that are on a restricted fat diet will develop dry, flaky skin. There are also some parasitic skin disorders such as *Cheyletiella* (known as "walking dandruff") that can cause the coat to appear flaky and dry. In addition, I've noticed an increase in these cases during the winter months when the air becomes drier than normal. If obesity is the problem, put your cat on an appropriate weight-loss program. You should have your veterinarian evaluate the skin and coat and make sure there isn't a parasitic problem. I've had great success treating these cats with a fatty acid supplement that is rich in omega-3 fatty acids. It may take four to six weeks to see any change, but usually after that the coat looks wonderful and there are minimal flakes.

Regards,  
Arnold Plotnick, DVM