



One Dog's Journey From Painful Hot Spots to Beautiful Fur in no Time Flat

Dog owners will agree – seeing your pet uncomfortable and in pain with hot spots and itchy skin leaves us feeling helpless. After years of persevering, using questionable medications, changing foods, visiting the vet – and *hundreds* of dollars later – we found a solution. Our 7-year-old golden retriever went from bleeding hot spots and a coat that would not grow to parading around with healthy skin and beautiful red fur in less than 6 weeks. In hind site I wished I had *really* done some research – more than reading the front of the dog food packages and thinking I was becoming informed. It took meeting an educated holistic pet food store owner and being introduced to Mountain Dog Food to really open my eyes.

Casey had suffered from allergies causing hot spots for about 5 years. During that time she had been on prednisone (a dangerous steroid), antibiotic pills which on occasion made her vomit yellow bile continuously, and expensive 'prescription' dog food that we could only purchase from the vet.

Like all pet owners we wanted our pet to be healthy – so we kept doing what we were told to do. That meant increasing the prednisone over time and extending the periods she needed to be on it – from summer to all year! Frustrated with the cost of the prescribed food, the fact that we were still dependent on prescription drugs and the inconvenience of needing to buy food during *Dr.'s hours*, I began roaming pet stores looking for alternatives. I tried a variety of dry foods on recommendations from staff in the various box stores but it never made a difference.

Despite the fact that Casey was taking the prednisone daily, the hot spots began coming back. In total desperation we had her shaved in the summer, hoping to give her skin some relief. We were stunned when we saw her. Not just that she looked funny (picture a pig!) but because the raw spots were extensive. It was sickening to see the evidence, especially under her neck and collar. She must have been in a lot of pain. The raw areas dried out and healed, and she enjoyed lying in the cool grass. But what at first looked funny became worrisome: her hair was not growing back except for a soft white undercoat. Another trip to the vet and we learned that her lack of hair growth was likely another side effect of the prednisone. Now we were really frustrated.





In January, a full six months after having her shaved, her undercoat began to fall out. Now I have to point out that her hair had still not grown – she was still white instead of the deep red color she should have been. Her undercoat had fallen out in previous winters, which caused us to leave her on prednisone all year long. The vet thought her diminishing coat was another sign of allergies. Since she had hardly any fur, the undercoat was soft white fuzz. It came out like small cotton balls. If we gently combed her with the cat's small brush she was left with pink skin showing. We had had enough. I slowly stopped the prednisone, switched to an adult strength over the counter antihistamine (after some internet research) and kept my fingers crossed. Change was minimal, but it had only been a few weeks.

In mid January we were out of dog food and I wandered into an amazing pet store. I found the Global & Ryan's Pet Foods on Plains Rd. in Burlington. The owner saw me staring at all of the bags of dry food and asked if he could help me. I gave him an overview of our trials and tribulations with Casey and *he gave me* an overview! The more interested I became in what he was saying, the more passionate he became about telling me about the pet food industry, the problems with 'prescription' dog food and the need for owners to really understand what they are feeding their pets.

Because Casey's situation seemed so severe he told me about the benefits of raw food. I immediately said "Oh I can't do that! I work and I don't cook". What I meant was I didn't have time to prepare raw food recipes when my family was lucky to have supper by 7 o'clock. He understood. He walked over to one of many freezers and took out a vacuum-sealed package of raw food produced by Mountain Dog Food: chicken with bones, pears, apples and carrots. He offered the package to me as a trial. I accepted the sample and left for home. The package was thawed by dinnertime. Despite the fact that my husband and son were shocked when they saw what I was putting in her food dish, Casey savored it. She ate slowly but steadily, unlike the usual routine of practically inhaling the dry kibble. After two days I went back for a full case of food, figuring we had nothing to lose. On store owners advice we added salmon oil and kelp (full of B Vitamins).

Two weeks after starting her on the raw food I began to wonder if this was just another wasted experiment. She still had some bleeding spots on her back. For some reason I took photos – maybe to prove that this was not working. I stopped in to the pet store but I could not shake the owners resolve. He encouraged me to stay the course and be patient. We did. One week later my husband and I left for an 8-day vacation. When we returned





home – exactly 34 days from starting the raw food diet and only 16 days from taking the photos showing no hair and bleeding hot spots – we were stunned. Casey’s entire body was covered in beautiful red fur that felt like velvet. She had no skin lesions. Our son had followed the Mountain Dog Food meal plan religiously and it showed.

Casey has been on Mountain Dog Food exclusively for over 18 months. We occasionally have to put her back on the over counter antihistamines when air born allergy season is at its worst – but never prednisone. She has NEVER had hot spots since starting raw food. And yes, I must admit we did change the raw diet a little. Instead of giving her raw chicken with bones, apples, pears and carrots all the time she sometimes get turkey with bones and fruits and vegetables!

I realize raw food may not be the right fit for every dog owner – but it is much easier and more convenient than you might think. When one block of food is 1/2 gone, we take out the next block to thaw in the refrigerator. We follow common sense routines and have never had any problems. My research into what is in pet foods is not over yet. However I do know that *really* reading the lists of ingredients on any pet food package is imperative and even down right shocking. Do you know what some of those ingredients actually are?...but that is for another article!

In the meantime, if your favorite pet store does not sell Mountain Dog Food, ask them to order it – or find a pet store that does! Your dog will thank you for it!

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