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"Tangie" - Pomeranian with Alopecia X



Tangie, a small 5 years old Pomeranian, was referred to me by my colleague Mr Dunne because of a skin problem. Much to distress of his owners Mr and Mrs Gale, he was becoming increasingly bald.

From a skin specialist point of view, it is important to ask a whole range of questions, because there are more than 30 diseases that can cause baldness. Is the dog itchy? When did the problem start? Has he been neutered? Had there been any specific event or medication just before the problem started? Had there been any signs of regrowth of hair? Etcetera, etcetera....

Tangie had not been itchy. He had gradually lost hair for the last 18 months, but had a beautiful fluffy coat when he was a puppy. Apart from the fact that he was born with a

hydrocephalus, making him walk in circles, and the broken leg he had as a pup, he had never been on any medication. However, Tangie was cryptorchid, which means that one of his testicles had not descended.

Physical examination of Tangie revealed that there were no other skin lesions, and that he was losing his coat in the collar area, on his sides and around the tail base. His head and legs were still fully haired. This typical localisation of the baldness is mostly seen in hormonal diseases.

The first step was to castrate Tangie, because undescended testicles have a bigger chance of becoming cancerous and can produce an excess of certain hormones, which can cause baldness. At the same time small biopsies of the skin were taken.

Tangie's undescended testicle was send for examination to a pathologist, but no tumour was detected.

His skin samples showed changes seen in hormonal diseases, but also seen in alopecia X. Tangie then had blood tests to determine if he suffered from an underactive thyroid gland or Cushing's disease. These tests were negative, and it is now believed that Tangie has got Alopecia X.

It is probably caused by an imbalance in the sex hormones of the adrenal glands, and is especially seen in male Pomeranians, Chow Chows, Keeshonds, Samoyeds and miniature Poodles.

Although the normal quality of life is excellent, and the dog is not bothered by his hair loss, it is of course very upsetting for the owners. Other people often think the dog is not being looked after. For that reason, we decided to try Tangie on some medication, and now, almost 4 months after we started it, Tangie is getting his hairs back. Just in time for the winter!!

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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