Seasonal (Cyclic) Flank Alopecia
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Seasonal flank alopecia is a hair cycle disorder that is associated with changing photoperiod. Hairs have a growing cycle, and the following illustration describes the 4 phases:

1. Anagen (Growing Phase)
   - The growing phase lasts two to seven years and determines the length of our hair.

2. Catagen (Regression Phase)
   - This stage lasts about ten days. The hair follicle shrinks and detaches from the dermal papilla.

3. Telogen (Resting Phase)
   - The resting phase lasts around three months. Around 90-10% of hairs are in this phase. Whilst the old hair is resting, a new hair begins this growth phase.

4. Exogen (Shedding Phase)
   - The Exogen represents the period from when a resting hair reaches its terminal position in the follicle to when it finally detaches. The resting hair is gradually loosened resting in shedding of the hair.

Hair is stimulated to move into the active growing phase by many things, but especially by hormones that are released from the pineal gland. The pineal gland is stimulated by photoperiod. In seasonal flank alopecia, a disconnect occurs in this chain of communication. As a result, the hair follicles do not produce an anagen hair after the old hair has fallen out.

The diagnosis of this condition is made by ruling out other endocrine diseases such as hypothyroidism and hyperadrenocorticism. Sometimes a biopsy is needed to obtain a diagnosis. The affected hair follicles have a peculiar appearance described as ‘witch’s feet’ on histopathology. Most of the time, a biopsy is not necessary because the condition is visually distinctive.

Fortunately, this is a purely cosmetic condition. It is not a sign of underlying disease. Melatonin can be administered to attempt to stimulate new hair growth, but often a change of seasons is all that is needed. Some dogs will lose their hair every year, and some dogs only lose their hair once. Some dogs re-grow their hair when the season changes, and some dogs experience permanent alopecia. Additionally, the skin often becomes hyperpigmented.