

## Norwegian Elkhound Notes 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026

No show news in the week after Crufts so a safety reminder instead.

“Spring has sprung; the grass is riz!” Grass is not the only thing that increases; so does moulting.

Most dogs grow a heavier coat in the winter even if they spend most of their time inside. This heavier coat means that come spring, there’s going to be hair everywhere. So if you don’t like tumbleweed under your furniture or carpets that look as if there was a snowstorm, get out a pair of rubber gloves; for the carpet not the dog! Go over the furniture with a rubber glove- you will be amazed how much hair you find. Then find a greyhound comb.

The first step in refreshing your dog’s coat should be combing rather than brushing. Brushing is good for shorter coats and removes the loose hairs but double coated breeds need combing regularly in order to separate the hair at skin level and prevent it from matting. Just start at the back end and divide the coat into narrow strips working your way forward. It’s an ideal opportunity to inspect the skin for lumps and bumps. Elkhounds can be prone to little warts that can be nipped off while small and of course sebaceous cysts. You would also see the tiny black specks of flea dirt, ticks or anything stuck in the fur. Daily combing with the wide end of a greyhound comb will lift a lot of the loose hair then a thorough comb out with the narrow end once a week will remove the majority. Brushing simply skims over the top and doesn’t separate the coat down to the skin. Bathing your dog after a good groom, loosens up any remaining winter coat so you will need to groom again. For the final finish if you show your dog, a small piece of silk stroked over the coat will remove stray hairs and make the top coat shine. (A tip from Mary Chadwick and Kitty Heffer).

Allergies in Spring are one of the MOST frustrating problems for both the owners and the vet. The most common classes of allergic dermatitis seen in dogs include flea bite allergies, food allergies, and atopy. Atopy is an allergic condition caused by inhaled allergens or the absorption of allergens through the skin. It is common for some dogs to have multiple allergies; they can be allergic to chicken or wheat, but also to grass pollens, moulds, tree pollens, and fleas. It can be very difficult to find both cause and cure so see your vet.

One allergy that can often be overlooked is rabbit mites. If you walk your dogs in areas with high rabbit populations the bites from these microscopic mites can drive dogs crazy with itching. Often called walking dandruff, the mites, *Cheyletiella yasguri*, sit on blades of grass waiting for a host to pass by. In years gone by the treatment was to bathe them in Alugan, a pink powder to dissolve in water, rather like a sheep dip. This was then found to be an organophosphate and very dangerous and was banned. The only thing I’ve found to kill the mites since then is Stronghold. To identify them your vet needs to do a skin scrape to look at under a microscope. You can try combing them really deeply over a sheet of black paper or fabric and if you are lucky and you watch carefully you may see some mites moving very slowly. Hence the name walking dandruff. The strange thing is, just like with flea bites, you can have 5 dogs covered in mites but only one will react badly to them but all the dogs need to be treated because the mites will transfer from dog to dog.

Another Spring problem is the new plants coming up. Bulbs in particular can be toxic for dogs. Maybe I’m lucky I’ve never had a dog eat plants or bulbs (except our peas, raspberries and

strawberries); our worst damage ever was all the daffodils being demolished by a litter of pups sitting on or trampling them. Pups though, are very inquisitive so stay with them when they are outside and be ready to stop any tasting adventures. If you do have a dog that tends to taste too many plants there are dozens of websites to tell you which are dangerous.

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