

Cats in Distress

"Rippling Skin Disorder" is a common name for a condition known technically as *Feline Hyperesthesia Syndrome (FHS)*, and it is characterized by a number of seemingly unrelated symptoms.

The critical difference between "normal crazy behavior" that most younger cats exhibit and feline hyperesthesia is that with the latter, **the cat is actually in distress**. It is also entirely possible that the stress the owner feels over these worrisome symptoms may be "telegraphed" back to the cat, thus exacerbating the problem.

Symptoms of Rippling Skin Disorder

- **The Trademark Rippling Skin**

The skin on the cat's lower back visibly ripples, accompanied by the cat's biting and scratching at his back or tail.

- **Loud and Insistent Meowing**

Cats afflicted with this syndrome may also meow loudly for no apparent reason, often at night.

- **Strange Eye Appearance**

His pupils may become dilated, and he may stare blankly into space. His eyes may appear "glassy".

- **Erratic Racing**

The cat will often run in circles, or race off, first in one direction, then another.

- **Sensitivity to Touch**

A cat affected with rippling skin disorder may sometimes show extreme sensitivity and discomfort with petting.

It is not surprising that a condition with so many varied symptoms also includes a varied number of theorized causes, ranging from a compulsive disorder to allergies or toxins. Nor is it surprising that this syndrome also carries a number of other descriptive names, such as self-mutilation syndrome, twitchy cat disease, feline psychomotor epilepsy, and atypical neurodermatitis.

Possible Causes of Rippling Skin Disorder in Cats

Physical causes are usually ruled out first, including

- **Pansteatitis (Steatitis, Yellow Fat Disease)**

Pansteatitis is a disease caused by an excess of unsaturated fatty acids, combined with a lack of sufficient Vitamin E. It is most often caused in cats by frequent consumption of red tuna, and some experts have blamed it on poor homemade diets. The resultant fat deposits can be

very painful to cats.

- **Brain Involvement**

Particularly with FSH cats displaying seizures, potential brain infection, trauma, or tumors should be investigated.

- **Toxins**

Use of toxic flea dips, flea collars with questionable ingredients, or ingestion of household cleaning agents should be ruled out.

- **Flea Allergies**

Certainly, itchy skin due to flea bites could be cause for erratic behavior in cats, and this potential cause should be relatively easy to rule out.

Assuming all of the above causes have been negated, Rippling Skin Disorder will most likely be treated as a form of OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder), or as a stress-related condition. **Treating Cats With Rippling Skin Disorder**

[Dr. Nicholas Dodman writes](#) that an FSH cat can be helped at home by relieving stressors along with providing exercise-based activities, such as interactive play with wand toys. Clicker training may be utilized to stimulate the cat's activity level and lift his depression.

Anti-convulsant medication, such as phenobarbitol, may be prescribed for an FSH cat subject to seizures. Finally, low dosages of mood-stabilizing drugs may be prescribed to help get kitty back on an "even keel."

Although a cat with Rippling Skin Disorder may never be completely "cured," you can work in partnership with your veterinarian to help him become more comfortable and to relieve your own worry and stress about this condition.