Coat brushing is most useful for detecting superficial parasites such as fleas and Cheyletiella.

### Coat brushing

**Technique**

1. Vigorously rub the dog’s coat or flea comb it over a light-coloured surface.
2. Examine the brushings.
3. Differentiate flea faeces from dirt by brushing suspected flea faeces onto damp white paper.
4. A red stain indicates the presence of dried blood (ie flea faeces).

### Interpretation

**Fleas**

Look for adult fleas, flea eggs and flea faeces. Note that it may be hard to find evidence of fleas if the patient has been recently bathed, or in flea allergic individuals who often groom the fleas off themselves.

Adult fleas are normally 1–4mm long, brown in colour, wingless, with three pairs of legs.

Flea eggs are small, shiny and clear to white. Flea faeces look like black curls.

**Cheyletiella**

There may be excessive scurf present. Mites may be seen moving (‘walking dandruff’). Coat brushings can be placed on a slide or collected using a tape strip, and examined under the microscope to confirm the presence of Cheyletiella.