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Tricholeichomania by Proxy

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Received Date: 17-04-2020; **Accepted Date:** 23-04-2020; **Published Date:** 30-04-2020

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Letter to Editor

To the editor: When preparing a talk for a hair meeting on self-inflicted hair loss I read with interest the letter published by W. Burgdorf in November 2009 about “Trichodaknomania by proxy” [1].

While I was working at home on my laptop and seating on the sofa dealing with trichotemnomania, trichoteiromania, trichorrhizophagia and trichodaganomania my dog, an extremely friendly female Vizla, came close to me and, with the idea of calling me out to the garden to play with her, she started licking my forearm [2-5].

Having myself at home both a cat and a dog I decided to experiment about this peculiar phenomenon described by W. Burgdorf.

It is well known by pet’s owners that cats have a much rougher tong than dogs.

With the purpose of stimulating both of my animals which commonly come to sit on the sofa one in each side while I prepare my lessons on my laptop, I decided to gently apply a commercial solution (Easy treat Bacon and cheese flavour Kong® Inc. USA) highly attractive for dogs on one of my forearms and just some commercial ice tea (Nestea® Nestle Inc. Switzerland), sweet and appealing to my stray cat on the left forearm. They both responded as expected and started licking with fruition my forearms. When I saw they started losing interest I added further stimulus.

I have been repeating the experiment for 5 simultaneous days and the average liking time was approximately 20 minutes.

On the left side (cat side) I developed a visible irritant dermatitis but no signs of alopecia were seen, whereas on the right side (dog side) nothing appeared.

From that experiment we could only conclude that cats have more irritating tongs than dogs but both are unable to epilate if they just use their tong and not their teeth.

The only explanation that comes to our mind regarding the publication by Burgdorf is that he got a chemical epilation due to the proteolytic enzymes present in the Irish setter's saliva or that the Oklahoma City dogs used teeth instead of their tong.

If the first hypothesis was correct then together with some greek colleagues we have arrived to the conclusion that the correct term to be used in that occasion should be: *tricholeichomania* by proxy.

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