

## Allergic Dermatitis

### What is an allergy?

An allergy is an overreaction to something that is in your pet's environment that can cause scratching, chewing, red skin, dandruff and often a malodorous coat, or even recurrent ear infections.

An allergy may be to one or more of the following:

1. Fleas - an allergy to flea saliva that is injected when the flea feeds
2. Food - usually a specific food protein – meat, dairy or cereal or food additive.
3. Contact - examples include; grass, carpet, "shake on vac".
4. Atopy - an allergy to inhalation of offending allergen. Usually seasonal e.g., pollen.

### What do you do if your pet has an allergy?

**A. Fleas** - It only takes one flea, so expert flea control is needed.

*FLEA TRIAL* – must do for 6- 8 weeks to be conclusive

- SIMPARICA chewable tablet monthly with a small meal
- NEXGARD spectra chewable tablet monthly with a small meal

**B. Diet** - A hypoallergic diet will help in many cases as colours/flavours/preservatives can aggravate allergies, or a food trial can be undertaken to eliminate different foods from the diet.

a) *HILLS PRESCRIPTION DIET Z/D* - is a specially formulated antiallergy diet

b) *WALTHAM* – Sensitive stomach or hypoallergenic - no colours or preservatives, always the same diet and are chicken and rice based.

c) Home-made choose one novel meat (chicken, fish, turkey, pork, kangaroo) and one novel carbohydrate (pasta, potatoes, carrots, rice, oats, chick peas, pumpkin).

1 part meat: 4 parts carbohydrate – feed 2 cups / 10 kg / day

\* If a food trial is being undertaken then the diet must be fed alone, with no snacks, for 6 weeks. At the end of this time, you should have noticed a decrease in itchiness, and your pet can now start trialling new foods. i.e., add one new food each week, and expect return of itchiness within a few days. You will be able to build up a list of allergic foods.

**C. Shampoo** - Some shampoos can actually cause your pet to be itchy, once they have experienced this then it is best to avoid these products.

Special shampoos can help reduce scratching by reducing oil build up and secondary bacterial and fungal infections.

- if no skin lesions – *Aloveen* – fortnightly – leave in conditioner lengths the anti-itch period
- pustules / scabs – *Malaseb* or *Pyohex* – use weekly and must contact skin for 10 minutes.

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**D. Fatty Acids** - Omega 3 Fatty Acids have been shown to decrease itchiness and dandruff. They also have anti-inflammatory properties. Side effects diarrhoea and flatulence.

Dose is higher than for humans – dose 1000 units for 5 kgs  
e.g., *Omega 3 Fatty Acid Supplement*  
*Fish oils - cod liver oil tablets or Canola or Sunflower oil*

**E. Anti-histamines:** few side effects – so very safe, unfortunately response is variable.  
ZYRTEC –1mg /kg/day – 10kg dog 10mg tablet daily.

## **F. Anti-inflammatories**

*Corticosteroids- prednisolone, dexamethasone, triamcinolone*

- SIDE EFFECTS - include increased thirst, urination, appetite, panting. Occasionally can cause vomiting and / or diarrhoea – so always best given with a meal, if occurs stop medication and ring vet.

Long term high dosage can cause – Diabetes, Liver Disease, Pancreatitis, Hyperadrenocortism.

a) Topicals - good direct action to the site of irritation, problem as may be licked off.  
- Neocort – topical corticosteroid, also local anaesthetic and antibiotic  
- Cortavance – topical corticosteroid that is not absorbed systemically

b) Tablets - good effective control, can produce side effects if used long term – so always try and wean dose to lowest effective, and best if alternative day therapy  
*Apoquel tablets daily only for older 1 year*  
*Cytopint injection monthly*

**G. Desensitization** - Blood tests or a specialist dermatologist can do intradermal skin tests - can be undertaken to determine exactly what your pet is allergic to. This is done especially if your pet is atopic, but is also useful to diagnose flea allergies and specific food allergies.

The results of the blood test can be used to build up a list of exclusions - such as diet, grasses/plants and fibres e.g., wool.

Or a desensitization program can be undertaken. This is where injections of increasing dosages of the offending allergen are given over a minimum of a nine-month period, the aim is to teach the body not to over react to these allergens which are found in the

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