Allergic Dermatitis in Dogs and Cats

Unlike people, who develop runny or itchy eyes and nose, animals manifest their allergies through skin conditions. These signs include:

- licking the feet or body daily
- inflamed or infected ears
- itchy or inflamed skin (“hot spots” in extreme cases)
- skin with hair loss, flakes, bumps, scales, discharge, or bad smells

There are 3 categories of allergies, which include:

**Flea bite hypersensitivity** - These animals may not ever be caught with a live flea on their bodies, but if they spend any time outside the house, or another animal spends time outside the house without flea protection, and comes inside, these animals could receive a flea bite. The saliva from one flea bite in an allergic animal can cause a reaction lasting up to 2 weeks.

**Food Sensitivity** - This can manifest as the skin conditions listed above, or with gastrointestinal signs such as, vomiting, diarrhea, flatulence or burping. The 5 most common food allergens of dogs and cats include:

- Chicken
- Corn
- Beef
- Wheat
- Soy
- Fish – in cats, can also be a common allergen.

**Inhalant/ Contact Dermatitis** - This includes any environmental stimuli, such as:

- Molds
- Pollens
- Grasses
- Dust Mites
- Trees
- Wool
- Cat Dander
- Human Dander

Many of these animals are allergic in all 3 areas, but often avoiding 2 of the 3 areas can be enough to end clinical signs.
Plan to Manage Allergic Dermatitis in Dogs and Cats:

**Generalized Allergy Treatment:** These groups can be used in combination or alone, based on the doctor’s recommendation.

**Antihistamines** can be prescribed, and typically do not cause drowsiness. Often one drug may help alleviate itching where another will have no effect. We recommend a 2 week trial of each to find the most effective. If one does seem to help, it can be used as needed for itchy symptoms, or skin reactions.

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) ___ capsule ___ mg every 12 to 24 hrs. (2mg/kg, 12.5mg/5 ml liq, 25 mg cap, 50 mg tab)
- Chlorphenaramine (Chlortrimeton) ___ tablet ___ mg every 8 to 12 hrs (.5mg/kg max k9, 2-4 mg cat, 2mg, 4 mg, sustain release 8mg, 12mg cap)
- Clemastine (Tavist-D) Cat only: Give ___ tablet ___ mg every 12 hrs. (.15mg/kg, increase efficacy may be seen with combo omega fatty acids, 1.34mg, 2.68 mg tab, .67/5ml liquid)
- Hydroxyzine Give ___ mg ___ capsule every 12 to 24 hrs. (K9:2.2mg/kg, Cat :1-2mg/kg or 5-10 mg/ cat ,10mg, 25mg, 50 mg, 100mg tab, 10mg/5 ml liq )

**Oral Omega 3 Fatty Acids:** Act as a natural antihistamine to decrease itching, and to nourish dry skin. We carry a pump form or a capsule. Very fishy smell, most animals like it, but not all.

**Atopica:** Cyclosporines are a newer alternative to regular oral steroid use. They provide great relief of symptoms without the immediate and long term effects of steroids.

**Oral or Injectable Steroids:** Provides immediate relief from itching, can also cause side effects of increased thirst, appetite and urination.

- Vetalog
- Depomedrol
- Prednisone
- Triamcinalone
- Dexamethasone

**Topical Steroids:** Gentocin and Genesis Spray can provide immediate relief without the side effects of oral steroids. This also has a topical antibiotic and antifungal ingredient as well. Spray on site of irritation.

**Cold Water Rinses:** Hosing dogs off with cold water for 10 to 15 minutes daily when weather is warmer can help decrease inflammation of skin, and physically remove contact allergies that may have settled on their skin during the day.
**Flea Bite Hypersensitivity Prevention:** These animals can not be bitten by a flea. Therefore they need to be on topical flea control from March through December. In severe cases, owners keep their animals on control year round. In cases of cats that spend time in and outdoors, we are still seeing live fleas in January!

**Topical flea control products:**

For dogs only:  
- Advantix (fleas, ticks, mosquitoes)  
- Frontline (fleas and ticks)  
- Advantage

For cats:  
- Frontline (fleas and ticks)  
- Advantage

**Beware** of counterfeit products sold in pet stores, and online (see USA Today article on our bulletin board in lobby), and “knock off” brands that at the least are ineffective, and at worst have caused dangerous side effects such as severe skin rashes, and in cats seizures and death. At our clinic, we treat at least 3 cats a year with these toxic reactions.

**Food Sensitivity Elimination:** We recommend a hypoallergenic food trial of 3 months, as dermatologists believe it can take this long to rid all of the offending allergens from the animal’s intestinal lining.

We have a variety of hypoallergenic foods that we can recommend. It is imperative during this trial that no other foods are given without the doctor’s consent, or the trial will fail. Even the smallest amount of an offending allergen can cause a return to symptoms.

**Good Proteins:**
- Turkey  
- Venison  
- Kangaroo  
- Fish (ok for dogs only)  
- Lamb  
- Duck  
- Rabbit

**Good Carbohydrates:**
- Potatoes  
- Rice  
- Oats

Fruits and Vegetables are usually good treats, favorites include:

- Carrots  
- Broccoli  
- Lettuce  
- Apples  
- Pears

Brands we recommend to try:

- Wellness  
- California Natural  
- Solid Gold  
- Eagle Pack  
- Eukanuba  
- Merrick’s  
- Wysong  
- Prairie  
- Innova  
- Purina Pro Plan
Toxic to some animals: Onions and Grapes
Avoid Corn as a food allergen

**Inhalant/Contact Allergy Treatment:**

Desensitization Shots: This is the ultimate treatment for inhalant/ contact allergies, when food and flea prevention are not enough to alleviate signs.

**Step 1:** Blood is taken from your pet, and sent to an allergy lab in California, where it is tested against the 40 most common allergens found in New York State.
Cost: $145

**Step 2:** 4 Weeks later we receive a faxed list of your pet’s allergens, ranging in strength from 1 to 4 (highest reaction). We select the 12 strongest reactions, and fax this back to the lab. Based on these selections an allergy serum is created specific to your pet. 3 to 4 weeks later we receive the serum and schedule an appointment to teach you how to give your pet desensitization shots with a very small needle in the skin. Eventually you will be giving a shot once a week during peak allergy times, and once a month during low allergen times.

Serum Cost: $110-135, with office visit $30 for demonstration of administration.

Once through the initial round of desensitization, serum orders should last 9 to 12 months. Follow up serum cost is $85-100.