

CLIENT ALLERGY INFORMATION SHEET

Allergies affect a large number of pets. Symptoms of allergies are variable. They are typically things like itchy skin, chewing on feet, vomiting or diarrhea, and chronic ear infections. These symptoms may be present alone or in combination with each other. This handout will serve as an informational piece only and is not intended to replace an exam by a qualified veterinarian. One important note is **allergies are not curable, they are only controllable.**

There are 3 major allergens:



Food

With food allergies pets are not allergic to a brand or type of food. Rather, they are allergic to the ingredients that are in the food. For example, corn, beef, wheat, fish etc. Itching is commonly seen around the face and rear.

There are 2 types of allergy foods:

- Novel Protein diets
 - Feeding a diet that has a protein and carbohydrate source the pet has not eaten before.
- Hydrolyzed diets
 - Feeding a diet where the protein is so small, the body doesn't recognize it as an allergen.

There is no good test available for veterinarians to define the exact cause of a food allergy. The only good way to determine a food allergy is by performing a food trial. A food trial consists of feeding an appropriate diet devoid of other potential sources of allergens (treats, rawhides, even heartworm preventatives). This exclusive trial should last at least 2 months and may be repeated if the first trial does not succeed.



Fleas

Many, if not all, dogs and cats are allergic to fleas to some extent. We do see pets however, that are extremely allergic to the saliva of the common flea. These patients become very irritated by the flea saliva that is exchanged during a blood meal. Some pets are so allergic that even a single bite can cause extreme discomfort and scratching. Many of these patients itch on their dorsal spinal tail head area.

The priority for this allergy is to get rid of the flea. To effectively do this we MUST:

- Use a reputable product from a reputable pharmacy.
- Make sure every pet in the house is treated monthly.
- Make sure the entire environment has been treated.
- The allergic pet may receive a more frequent application of the flea medication.
- DO NOT use over the counter medication for this problem.



Atopy

These are the same allergens that cause people to have “Hay fever.” These allergens are brought in, either through the respiratory tract, or through direct absorption through traumatized skin. They create an intense allergic response both systemic and localized. Patients do not **typically** have clinical signs that relate to the respiratory system, but most commonly have a manifestation in the dermal system. Most patients will:

- Itch or chew on their feet
- Itch or chew at their flank or inner legs
- Some will have runny eyes and runny nose

With these patients we can perform some diagnostic testing that will aid in telling us what the pet is allergic to. There are 2 tests available for determining what our allergen may be.

- Intradermal Skin Testing
 - Individual injections directly into the skin
- Rast Testing
 - Blood test measuring circulating immunoglobulins

If you travel to a board-certified dermatologist, you will most likely have both tests performed at the same time. The goal of this type of diagnostic aide is to have the laboratory make true allergy injections for the pet in an effort to hyposensitize them to their allergens. This is a series of potent injections that are given to each animal following a specific schedule.

Final notes:

- Remember allergies are not curable.
- Any allergy can cause itching in any or all areas of the body.
- **Many different treatment modalities may be necessary in order to best control your pet’s allergy.**
 - Often antibiotics, antifungals, shampoos, or other topical medications may be needed.
- Because there are not many allergic reactions related to histamine, antihistamines often do not work well.
- Steroids have side effects, and some are very negative.
- New medications have been developed to try to help patients without having to use steroids.
 - Atopica (cyclosporine)
 - Apoquel
 - Cytopoint injections
 - Zenrelia

