



ENVIRONMENTAL & SEASONAL ALLERGIES

One of the most common conditions veterinarians see in their practice is also one of the most frustrating. **Allergies**. Any pet owner who suffers from allergies themselves can understand the misery that allergies can cause their pets. Allergies are often a seasonal problem, yet there are dozens of different pollens and 'proteins' that we breathe in (or come into contact with) that can trigger allergies, and these allergens come and go from day to day, week to week and season to season. Local weather forecasters often include a "Pollen Index" as a warning to allergy sufferers.

What Effect Do Allergies Have Many pet owners are surprised to discover that pets are allergic to the exact same things that people are. So why do pets scratch, bite, lick and chew while people have problems with congestion and runny eyes and noses? Quite simply, one key factor (among many factors) is a mast cell. Whenever a pet or person has a sensitivity to a particular allergen (anything that triggers an allergy such as pollens, house dust, etc.) and the allergen makes contact with that mast cell, the mast cell then ruptures and releases histamine. This histamine release leads to a series of events that result in the miserable effects of allergies. Since the effect is the same in people and pets, the only difference is the location of these mast cells. In people, mast cells are mainly found in the upper air passages and sinus areas of the face. That's why we snuffle and sneeze and get congested. In pets, the mast cells are located mostly in the skin, and that's why our dogs and cats scratch, bite, lick and chew.

Can Allergies Be Cured ? While it is rare, allergies can be cured ... but ONLY through Immunotherapy (see page 2).
Our goal at CVPC is to control and manage the allergies and find relief from the misery associated with them.

Seasonal Allergies As mentioned before, there is a strong seasonal nature to allergies, with an overlap of these seasons.

- **Spring** is a time for allergies to **pollens from flowers and trees (March through May)**.
- **Summer** is a time for allergies to **pollens from grass (May through August)**.
- **Autumn** is a time for allergies to **pollens from weeds (September through December)** and **fleas** are at their peak in NC.

Environmental (Indoor) Allergies

- When biting, scratching, licking occur **Year-Round**, we always have to consider 2 possibilities: Environmental (Indoor) Allergies ... or ... Food Allergies (or both). Environmental Allergies result mostly from **house dust, dust mites and molds and mildews**. And there are many other allergens that can be potential year-round problems: **cigarette smoke, feathered pillows, comforters, wool fabrics, etc.**

Unfortunately, many pets suffer from a combination of Seasonal Allergies and Environmental Allergies and Food Allergies !

Controlling Allergies: There are a number of ways we can help give your pet needed relief ...

FOR MILD ALLERGY CASES (Mild itchiness ... no loss of hair ... mild skin irritation)

Frequent "Sponge Baths": If there is one simple, but powerful strategy I recommend for every pet with allergies, this would be the one thing I would do several times a day during allergy season ! This simple procedure can really make a difference for indoor pets, with little effort for the pet owner. Quite simply, every time your pet goes outdoors and comes back inside, take a **washcloth with cool water ONLY (do NOT use Baby Wipes or Pet Wipes !)** and give him / her a **full-body wipe-down**, focusing attention on the feet (tops and bottoms), legs, chest and belly, the hind end, and the face, nose and neck. We're wiping off the pollens and allergens that get onto the fur and work their way to the skin, and then migrate into the body where they will trigger the effects of allergies. Also, **putting a t-shirt or some clothing on your pet** when it goes outside can be extremely helpful as well.

Dermoscent Essential 6 Spot-on: Essential 6 is a once-a-week topical product (applied to the back of the neck) to restore hydration to the skin, which can help relieve allergies. Dermoscent can also diminish hair loss, reduce dandruff, and help deodorize those dogs that smell funky due to bacterial and yeast infections.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids / Fish Oils: Every itchy pet should get extra Omega-3's in the form of fish oils ! Why ? Fatty acids can greatly enhance the 'epidermal barrier', the protective layer of the skin. The better the barrier, the better the skin can repel pollens and dusts, and prevent the loss of moisture needed in the skin. Also, fatty acids have an anti-inflammatory benefit to help (only slightly) relieve any itching. But you must give adequate doses. So here is how to measure the proper dose ...

- * **The most important issue when dosing Fish Oils is the amount of EPA + DHA** ... not just the total quantity of Fish Oil.
- * For best benefit, pets need **30 to 35 mg per pound of body weight of combined EPA + DHA daily**.
- * For the correct dose, **add the EPA + DHA listed on the label**. Example: A container listing 180 mg EPA + 120 mg DHA on the label = 300 mg TOTAL. This 300 mg would be the correct dose for a 10 pound dog. A 20 lb dog should get combined EPA + DHA of 600 mg to 700 mg each day. A 50 lb dog should get a combined 1500 mg to 1750 mg per day ... and so on.
- * Flax seeds and chia seeds won't help ! They have Omega-3's, but are virtually unavailable as a source of Omega-3's in dogs, and not Usable at all for cats, so they won't help at all for allergies.

Antimicrobial Therapy: Bacterial infections of the skin (pyoderma) and Yeast infections are commonly seen in allergic pets and can be a source of intense itching. Yeast infections in particular can be extremely itchy and irritating, as well as creating a peculiar 'greasy' odor to the skin. **We have available Keto-C Spray, Keto-C Skin Wipes and Keto-C Flush (for both ears and skin)** which, when applied frequently to affected areas of the skin, can help treat both yeast and bacterial infections. I also recommend frequent (3 times weekly, then taper) bathing in our **VetraSeb Shampoo** (let your pet soak for 10-15 minutes !) along with **daily** application of the **Keto-C Spray, Wipes or Flush**. A new product to help with both bacterial and yeast infections of the skin is **PYOspot**, a once-a-week topical liquid that has proven to help reduce the likelihood of a skin infection from becoming a recurring problem.

Food: **Hill's DERM COMPLETE** ... or ... **Royal Canin Skin Support** Dog foods have been formulated to help protect the skin from the exposure of pollens / environmental allergens. Many customers tell us they've had good results with their dog's seasonal allergies. Additionally, **Hill's Derm Complete** diet can be extremely beneficial for dogs with **food allergies !** Order these foods and have them shipped directly to your home via our website: www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com. Go to "Food Delivery" at the top of the homepage, and choose either Hills, Royal Canin or Purina Pro Plan, then set up an account to place your orders.

COOL(!) WATER BATH + Cool Rinse + Towel Dry (No hot-air blow dryer) + Bathe OFTEN (MORE is BETTER) !

* **GOOD** - If your dog is intensely itchy, a COOL WATER Bath + COOL WATER Rinse + Towel Dry (do not use a heated blow dryer !) should provide relief for ~1 day. Water soothes the itch, re-hydrates the outer skin layers, and washes away allergens and pollens that can be absorbed through the skin. If you cannot bathe your pet, at the very least use a damp cloth and wipe them down several times a day, focusing on the face, the feet and legs, the chest and belly, and the rump area.

* **BETTER** - **Pramox + Oatmeal Shampoo** and **Aloe & Oatmeal shampoos** can be extremely helpful for the short-term (~24 hrs) relief of itchy pets. The Pramox Shampoo has an anti-itch medication added to the shampoo. I definitely encourage frequent bathing of dogs in need of relief. When you bathe with our shampoos, you are moisturizing the skin ~ not drying it out !

* **BEST** - For best results, use the appropriate shampoo for a particular skin condition. For extremely itchy dogs, a shampoo with a topical anesthetic such as **Pramox-1 with Oatmeal Shampoo (available at our events)** can be extremely helpful. I already discussed the **VetraSeb Shampoo (and Keto-C Spray, Flush or Wipes)** for dogs with bacterial and / or yeast infections.

IMPORTANT #1- DO NOT bathe your itchy pet in warm/hot water as it will often intensify the itchiness ! Think COOL !

IMPORTANT #2 - Leave medicated shampoos on the skin for at least 10 to 15 minutes for best benefit. And medicated shampoos do not lather as much, so avoid wasting more than you need.

IMPORTANT #3 - Please do not use people shampoos for pets ! (... and, yes, that includes Dawn ! Save it for your dirty dishes)

Antihistamines: Antihistamines **DO NOT WORK WELL in DOGS or CATS ... but they are Safe to use!** But they may help if the itching is mild ... AND when bacterial and fungal infections are under control ... AND when fatty acids/Omega-3 supplements are given at the same time. **Just as with people, we don't know which one will work, if any ! Since there are different types of antihistamines, if one doesn't work after about 7 days, it isn't going to work. Try a different one.** Here are 3 over-the-counter (OTC) products + 1 prescription medication that you can try.

- 1) **Allegra (Fexofenadine) 60mg Tablet** - Dogs: 1 to 2 mg per lb **once a day**
 - * Toy dogs (5-15 lbs) 1/2 tablet (30mg total) daily
 - * Medium dogs (25-50 lbs) 1 1/2 tablet (90mg total) daily
 - * Small dogs (15-25 lbs) 1 tablet (60mg total) daily
 - * Large Dogs (50-75 lbs) 2 tablets (120mg) daily
- 2) **Claritin (Loratadine) 10mg Tablet** - Dogs: Give 1 mg per 5 lbs of body weight **once a day**
 - * Toy dogs (5-15 lbs) 1/4 tablet daily
 - * Medium dogs (25-50 lbs) 1 tablet daily
 - * Small dogs (15-25 lbs) 1/2 tablet daily
 - * Large Dogs (50-75 lbs) 1 1/2 tablets daily
- 3) **Zyrtec (Cetirizine) 5mg and 10mg tablets ... or ... Xyzal (Levocetirizine) 5mg tablets**
 - * Toy dogs (5-15 lbs) - One 5 mg tablet once a day
 - * Small / Medium dogs (15-40 lbs) - 10 mg once a day
 - * Medium/Large dogs (40+ lbs) - 10 mg twice daily
- 4) **Hydroxyzine (Vistaril) 10 mg - 25 mg - 50 mg (Requires a Prescription)** ~ somewhat similar to Zyrtec
 - Dogs: 1 mg per pound of body weight 2 to 3 times per day (Ex. 25 lb dog gets a 25 mg tablet 2 or 3 times a day)

What about **Benadryl** (Diphenhydramine) ??? I find that Benadryl is seldom helpful for stopping itching, but can make them drowsy and less likely to itch while they are dozing. Benadryl can be useful for dogs with sinus issues (runny eyes and nose and sneezing). Give 1 mg per pound of dog's weight 2 to 3 times daily (Ex. A 25 lb dog gets 25mg 2 or 3 times daily). For mildly irritated, runny eyes, you can try **Alaway** drops, available at any pharmacy.

FOR MODERATE TO SEVERE ALLERGY CASES (The pet is very itchy & chewy ... quite a bit of hair loss ... very red and irritated skin ... often with a skin infection)

Flea Control: Some of the itchiest dogs we see are from allergic reactions to flea bites. If your pets have fleas, you **MUST** get rid of them. And ALL pets need to be treated for fleas ... not just the itchy ones. We carry the *best* flea products. Do NOT waste your money on the flea control junk you buy at pet stores and the big box retail stores.

Non-Cortisone / Non-Steroid Medications to Manage Allergies

◆ **Apoquel (Oclacitinib):** This prescription tablet has proven to be very effective in controlling itching in ~80% of dogs. It is popular since it works well, and there are few side-effects. Initially, we give it twice a day for 10-14 days ... then give it once a day as needed. It does *not* have the potentially harmful effects on the body's adrenal glands like steroids do. It's not approved for use in cats.

◆ **Cytopoint:** Cytopoint is an injection that mimics the body's natural immune (defense) system. Given during the 'itchy season' for allergic dogs, ~80% of dogs get significant relief from the itching within 3 days. Most dogs will get continued relief for 4 to 8 weeks. It is not a steroid, and side-effects are very rare. It is not approved for cats.

◆ **Atopica (Cyclosporine):** Atopica has proven to be effective at controlling allergies in many dogs AND cats, but it takes about 5 to 6 weeks to begin working. Once it takes effect, most pets can be tapered off the medication to once or twice a week, so it can be cheaper than Apoquel in the long run. When given with Fish Oils (see the first page), Atopica has been shown to work even better.

Cortisone / Corticosteroids: In many situations, it is extremely helpful to use corticosteroids (cortisone) to temporarily relieve your pet's discomfort. While we get excellent results from cortisone, the side-effects make it undesirable for long-term use. In the short-run, we see an increase in thirst and urination, increase in appetite, increased panting and sometimes pets appear more anxious or agitated. But nearly every pet received tremendous relief from the misery of itching, chewing, biting, etc. They feel so much better !

Immunotherapy: Allergen-Specific ImmunoTherapy (ASIT) based on intradermal skin testing or blood/serum testing can be a safe and effective way to control itching due to allergies. It requires skin and/or blood tests, and it's more expensive than other forms of treatment (count on ~\$300-600 for just the testing alone), and it may take weeks to months before results may be seen once treatment is started. But ... **it is possible to cure the allergies of some dogs** that are severely itching and chewing.

Typically, each dog is tested for 60-80 different items. Among the items are **local grasses, weeds, ragweed, pollens from trees and shrubs, flowers, molds and mildews, house dust, epidermals (cat skin, dog skin, etc), miscellaneous items (tobacco, kapok, cotton, wool, etc), feathers, house dust, and fleas**. Yikes ! As you can see, there are endless allergens that pets can be allergic to, and that doesn't include food allergies (btw, there is no reliable test for food allergies !).

Once it has been determined what a pet is allergic to, immunotherapy can begin. The idea is to "de-sensitize" the pet to whatever it is they're allergic to through injections, or drops (in the mouth) or a spray (in the mouth) regularly for the desensitization process. Some pets may need to continue treatment for life. It may take weeks to months to see results, but most pets respond well.

Conclusion: As you now see, there are many ways to help a pet that is itchy due to allergies. We are always happy to help improve the quality of your pet's life, which will in turn, improve your relationship with your beloved friend.

June 2022