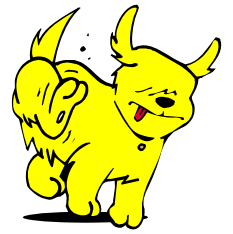


# Allergy Action Plan



Chronic skin infections. Chronic ear infections. Licking and chewing constantly at their feet. Rubbing their head and body all over the carpet and furniture. Keeping you up all night scratching. Any of this sound painfully familiar? If so, your dog or cat may suffer from allergies. **There are 3 main types of allergies which are the common culprits: 1) Flea allergy, 2) Food allergy, and 3) Inhalant allergy (otherwise known as “atopy”).** Pets can commonly suffer from multiple allergies as well. There are several diagnostic steps that should be taken to determine which allergies, if any, are causing your pet to suffer. The following is a brief breakdown of those steps.

**Flea allergy:** This one is easy. Keep your pet on a flea prevention product every month of the year! Flea prevention products include Comfortis<sup>®</sup>, Frontline<sup>®</sup>, and Advantage<sup>®</sup>. If the symptoms resolve and do not return, more than likely your pet had an allergy to fleas.

**Food allergy:** Perform a diet trial for at least 8 to 12 weeks. There are 2 different approaches to this. 1) Feed a diet with a novel protein and carbohydrate source, sources that your pet has never eaten. The diet that we use for this is called California Naturals Sweet Potato and Herring<sup>®</sup>. 2) Feed a diet with a hydrolyzed protein source. In this diet, a conventional protein source is used but the protein is broken down into molecules too small to stimulate the immune system. The diet we use for this is called Hill’s Z/D Ultra<sup>®</sup>. These diet trials **MUST** be strict. This means that all treats must be based on the same food source as the test diet and that the pet **ONLY** eats the test diet. Any variations can sabotage the diet trial. Chewable heartworm prevention (Heartgard, Iverhart) must be replaced with tablets (Interceptor) as well. If the symptoms resolve during the diet trial, the pet can either remain on the test diet or we will gradually re-introduce protein sources to see which ones the pet can handle.

**Inhalant allergy/Atopy:** There are 2 ways to diagnose this type of allergy. 1) Perform a blood test (Heska) that tests for antibodies (immune reactions) to different regional allergens such as grasses, weeds, trees, molds, and dust. 2) Perform an intradermal skin test. This is the same wheal and flare test they use to diagnose allergies in humans. A referral to a dermatologist is required for this test. If either test is positive, then immunotherapy, or allergy shots, should be instituted.

Other tests may need to be performed to rule out other dermatologic conditions that may mimic allergic skin conditions. These tests include skin scraping, fungal cultures, thyroid tests, and skin biopsies (to name a few).

**It is important to realize that allergies are lifelong conditions that can be managed, not cured. Patience is key!!!**



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