



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 most often a seasonal problem, from dozens of different pollens or dusts that we either breathe in or come into contact with. These allergens (pollens and dust) 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. North Carolina is a prime area for allergies

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 suffer with sinus congestion and runny eyes, etc? While there are quite a few reasons for this, a key factor is the location in our bodies where "reactive cells" reside. With people, the majority of these reactive cells (such as 'mast cells') are mainly found in the upper air passages and sinus areas of the face. That's why people sneeze and get sinus congestion, runny noses, runny eyes, etc. In dogs and cats, however, the reactive cells are mostly in the skin. And that's why pets bite, scratch, chew, lick, rub, etc. Another important difference between pets and people is that allergies in people are driven by a "histamine pathway". That's why we can take anti-histamines to (hopefully) reduce the effects of allergies. In pets, however, allergies are driven by a "cytokine pathway" ... not histamine ... which is why anti-histamines (such as Benadryl) are seldom of any benefit for pets.

Can Allergies Be Cured? While it is extremely 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 Plant Pollens are responsible for Seasonal Allergies in both Pets and People

- **Spring** is a time for allergies to Pollens from 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 strategy I recommend for every pet with allergies, this would be it: 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 that get onto the fur, then work their way to the skin, and then migrate into the body where they will trigger the effects of allergies. Otherwise, your pet will bring the pollens indoors with them. Then our pets lay down on their bed or on the furniture, and the pollens will continue to pile up every time they go outdoors. Soon they are lying in a puddle of all the pollens that are triggering their allergies. It is important to **wipe down ALL pets** that go outside to keep as much pollen outside as possible.

Putting a t-shirt or some clothing on your pet when it goes outside can also be helpful as well.

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 reduce skin irritation, but they do not help much with itching, etc. But you must give adequate doses. So here is how to measure the proper dose ...

*** The most important factor 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.

*** I recommend using a Fish Oil for Human Use ... NOT a pet version.** Why? The quality of fish oil for humans is better AND it's cheaper! There are tons of choices, many of which aren't good quality, so I suggest highly reliable brands to choose from: **Thorne ... Carlson ... Nordic Naturals ... The Zone OmegaRx2 ... Kion ... HUM OMG ... InnovixLabs.** <PS Always look for discount codes !>

*** Flax seeds and chia seeds will NOT 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 skin support and health.

FOR MODERATE to SEVERE ALLERGY CASES (Very itchy & chewy pet ... possible hair loss ... very red and irritated skin ... often with a bacterial or yeast infection of the skin)

Antimicrobial Therapy: Bacterial infections and/or yeast infections of the skin are commonly seen in allergic dogs and can actually make the itching more intense than the actual source of the allergy. Yeast infections in particular can be extremely itchy and irritating, often resulting in a rancid odor to the skin. Many of these pets need **antibiotic** tablets/capsules (for bacterial infection) and/or **anti-fungal** tablets (for yeast infections) medication. We often use **Douxo PYO Shampoo**, topical **Douxo PYO Mousse**, and / or **Douxo Chlorhexidine Spray** to help eliminate bacterial and yeast infections.

CBD + CBDA: The newest tool that we have for managing your dog's allergies is CBD + CBDA. Many dogs do not benefit from CBD, but will only benefit from CBDA. **ElleVet is the only CBD+CBDA product that exists for pets.** Recent research has proven that **ElleVet** can be extremely helpful to control your dog or cat's intense itching, chewing, licking, etc. ElleVet is also a Full-Spectrum CBD product, which is essential to its potential benefit. FYI, there are NO hallucinogenic properties in ElleVet products.

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. These foods are not a cure, but can be very beneficial. Additionally, Hill's Derm Complete diet can be extremely helpful 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.

* **BETTER** - **Oatmeal shampoos (for Dogs!)** can be very helpful for **short-term (~24 hrs) relief** of itchy pets. 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 itchy dogs, a bath can provide short-term, but very beneficial relief. My go-to shampoo is our **Aloe & Oatmeal Shampoo** (available online and at our events). The Aloe provides additional moisturizing while the Oatmeal helps with itchy relief. For dogs with bacterial and / or yeast infections, our medicated **Douxo PYO Shampoo** or topical **Douxo PYO Mousse** (as well as **Douxo Chlorhexidine Spray**) can make a world of difference.

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 ESPECIALLY do NOT use Dawn ! It's for your dirty dishes)

IMPORTANT #4 - If you cannot bathe your pet, use our **Douxo CALM Spray** at least every other day.

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 or online.

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.

Antihistamines (Allegra, Benadryl, Claritin and Zyrtec): Using anti-histamines are usually a waste of time and money. Simply put, they **DO NOT WORK WELL in DOGS. But they are Safe** ! They may provide only temporary relief if the itching is mild ... if there are no bacterial and fungal infections ... and if 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. If you try one and it doesn't work after 5 to 7 days, it isn't going to work. Try a different one.**

For those dogs that have sinus drainage that causes "reverse sneezing" (which sounds like a dog is 'schnorking' or a choking-like sound), I suggest trying **Benadryl** (Diphenhydramine). For 'reverse sneezing', give Benadryl at a dose of 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). Benadryl can make dogs drowsy.

Hydroxyzine (Vistaril) is prescription-only, and is generally pretty useless.

For mildly irritated, runny eyes, you can try **Alaway** or **Pataday** or **Opcon-A** or **Naphcon A** drops, available at any pharmacy.

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

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