



FOOD ALLERGIES in PETS

You likely know someone who has an allergy to some type of food, such as peanuts, shellfish, yeast (in bread), dairy products, etc. But did you know that food allergies account for about 10 to 15% of allergy cases that we see in dogs and cats? And the problem has been getting worse in recent years.

The majority of allergies we see in pets are related to pollens (from grass, trees and weeds), dust and dust mites, molds and mildew, as well as fleas. Allergies from these sources often cause hair loss, skin irritation, skin infections as well as frequent biting, scratching, chewing, licking and rubbing. Yet pets with

food allergies will often exhibit the same symptoms and the same skin conditions. To complicate matters, **the majority of pets with food allergies also have an allergy to either pollens, dust, molds, mildew or fleas.**

Food allergies must always be suspected whenever a **puppy less than 7 months of age** starts itching and chewing ... or a dog about **5 years old** (and older) starts having itching issues when they've never had problems before ... and dogs that are **itchy year-round** with skin and/or ear problems. The typical itchy areas include the **EARS**, the **FEET**, the **armpits**, the **face**, and the **groin** area. We have a stronger suspicion of food allergies whenever a pet also has **gastro-intestinal problems** such as occasional vomiting, diarrhea or an increase in the frequency of bowel movements.

WHAT ARE DOGS USUALLY ALLERGIC TO ? When we suspect a food allergy, YOU MUST AVOID THESE !!!

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DOGS: * CHICKEN and often <u>Turkey</u> and <u>Duck</u> and BEEF and often <u>Bison</u>	}	AVOID
* Lamb * Dairy (appears on food labels as Whey Protein or Casein)	}	During
* Pork * <u>Brown Rice</u> * <u>Wheat</u> * <u>Soy</u> * <u>Corn</u>	}	Food Trial !

* **These common food ingredients** account for **~90%** of food allergies in dogs. **If you commit to a food allergy trial** (details later), you need to **avoid the ingredients in the box above !** Oatmeal, pasta, fish, rice flour, artificial food additives and food preservatives can also cause food allergies. Most dogs are allergic to only 1 to 3 food sources.

Dog Breeds often affected: Cocker Spaniels, Springer Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, Collies, Poodles, Schnauzers, Shar-Peis, Westies, Boxers, Dachshunds, Lhasa Apsos, German Shepherds and Dalmatians

CATS: * **BEEF, FISH and DAIRY** (appears as **Whey Protein** or **Casein** on food label) for **~80%** of food allergies
 * Pork, chicken, rabbit, lamb, eggs, clam juice and cod liver oil are other potential sources of food allergies
Cat breeds more likely to be affected: Siamese and mixed-Siamese

A VERY COMMON MISTAKE THAT MANY PET OWNERS MAKE Most pet parents are not aware that environmental / seasonal allergies are a more common cause for their pet's itching than food allergies or fleas. You can't ignore the importance of managing a seasonal allergy. **If your pet has both a food allergy and a seasonal allergy, they will continue to bite, scratch and chew during the seasonal allergy, regardless of the diet. However, Hill's DERM COMPLETE is designed to help dogs with either a seasonal allergy and/or food allergy.**

By far the most common mistake pet owners make when they think their pet may have a food allergy is to simply purchase a new dog or cat food without considering what may actually be causing a food allergy ... or they assume that their pet has an allergy to grain. So they switch to a grain-free diet (which *seldom* helps), or an "all-natural" diet (honestly, I'm not sure what an "all-natural" diet even is ... but it sure sounds *great*, doesn't it !?), or any diet that sounds like it's better than what they're currently feeding their pet.

But all too often, the majority of pet owners are doing nothing more than just exchanging 'brand names', without actually avoiding the ingredient(s) responsible for the food allergy. Now that you know what pets are most likely allergic to, you understand why this rarely works. Avoid the trap of simply changing the diet just because you feel compelled to "do something".

DIAGNOSING FOOD ALLERGIES With allergies to pollens, fleas, house dust, etc, we can perform skin tests or blood tests to find out specifically what pets (or people) are allergic to. **Unfortunately, there's no reliable skin test or blood test in veterinary medicine that can help us identify what food a pet may be allergic to.** So, when we suspect a food allergy, we want to place that pet on a "food allergy trial", meaning that we need to feed a diet that your pet is far less likely to be allergic to ... for ~8 weeks !

We now have a variety of commercial diets designed to "test" for a food allergy, but there is no single diet that works for all allergic pets. Even under the best of circumstances, **only ~85% of pets with food allergies respond well to a food allergy trial.** That means that ~1 in 7 dogs won't respond well. Frustrating, isn't it ?

WHAT TO FEED A DOG WHEN WE SUSPECT A FOOD ALLERGY: Diets for food allergies are divided into 2 categories:

1) Novel ("new") protein diets – Offer a food that your pet has never been exposed to or eaten before, such as:
Catfish, Crocodile, Goat, Kangaroo, Ostrich, Rabbit, Trout, Venison, Salmon or White Fish.
 Quality brands I recommend that have limited ingredients AND are fairly easy to find at pet stores or purchase online are: **Acana ... Blue Buffalo ... Canidae ... Hills ... Natural Balance ... Purina Pro Plan ... Royal Canin ... Taste of the Wild ... Zignature.**
 Since carbohydrates will also be part of the diet, I prefer **Sweet Potato ... or Peas ... or Peas & Carrots ...or Lentils.**
 * I also highly recommend feeding your dog **Hills' Derm Complete** which has proven to be beneficial for dogs with **both a food allergy as well as an environmental / seasonal allergy.**
 * **Royal Canin** has Selected Protein (**Rabbit, Venison, Whitefish or Kangaroo**) diets.
 * **Purina Pro Plan** has a **Salmon-based** Adult Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula for dogs

Each of the **Hills, Royal Canin** and **Purina Pro Plan** diets can be ordered (with **free shipping to your home**) through our website: **www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com**. On the homepage, click on '**Food Delivery**'. On the drop-down box, find **Hills, Purina Pro Plan and Royal Canin**. Sign up for an account and place your orders from this site.

2) Protein Hydrolysate diet - These diets are made by chopping up the proteins in the food to tiny "peptides" which the body presumably cannot detect, and so the body should not have an allergic reaction to. However, some pets will still show allergies to some of these foods (such as Hills Z/D). However, **there is one hydrolyzed protein diet that is clearly the BEST and can be used during a food allergy trial: Royal Canin ULTAMINO. You can order ULTAMINO through our website (see above for details).**

HOME-MADE DIETS FOR DOGS: Home-made diets can be successful. But it takes a **very** dedicated pet owner since it is imperative to prepare the same home-cooked diet for a minimum of 8 weeks. Read that again: A minimum of 8 weeks ! The best choice is a combination of a carbohydrate such as sweet potatoes, peas or pinto beans (and, of course, DO NOT add butter, milk, bread !) with a novel protein such as **rabbit, venison, kangaroo, ostrich**. (these can often be ordered online). As mentioned earlier, **salmon and white fish (such as tuna)** can be used, but **it's best if your pet has not eaten them before**.

If you intend to feed a home-made diet long-term, make sure your pet is getting ALL the essential vitamins and minerals and amino acids, etc that it requires, or you could create additional health risks ! I highly recommend visiting **www.ACVN.org** (Amer. College of Veterinary Nutritionists) to find a veterinary nutritionist to consult for your pet's unique needs. A couple of other valuable resources are: **www.balanceit.com** and **www.petdiets.com** Both are run by ACVN members and provide home diet formulation services.

HOME-MADE DIETS FOR CATS: Since cats can be fussy about what they eat, cooking up a home-made diet for a kitty can be a big challenge, but there are several choices of proteins. Lamb, ostrich, rabbit, venison or duck have all been used with good success. They can be fed alone, or they can be blended with potato or rice. In general, we recommend a commercial food allergy diet for cats since they can be so finicky. And check the websites above.

The Biggest Challenge to a Food Allergy Trial: 1) HOW COMMITTED ARE YOU ? And 2) TIMING !

Once we begin a food allergy trial, **these pets can eat absolutely NOTHING ELSE FOR 8 to 10 WEEKS except for the special diet !** This means that no other foods, treats, flavored chew toys, or flavored heartworm preventives should be given to your pet during the trial. Period.

Also, **TIMING a food allergy trial is crucial**. If your dog has Seasonal Allergies, and you change the diet when it is biting, scratching, chewing, etc from seasonal allergies, you may not notice any benefit with a diet change !!! **Definitely consider Hills DERM COMPLETE** as it has proven to be beneficial for dogs with both seasonal / environmental allergies as well as food allergies.

Important --> If a pet owner should decide to cheat / stray at all from the recommended diet, it will defeat the whole purpose of the food trial ! Either you're committed ... or you're not. There's no in-between. And make sure that ALL family members are committed, too ! (We're watching you, Grandma and Grandpa ... and all toddlers, too !)

Very important strategies for you to follow for DOGS on a Food Allergy trial:

- 1) **Look back on the first page again. I list the Top 90% of sources of food allergies in dogs. If we suspect a dog has food allergies, then avoid these ingredients ! You must read the dog food labels.**
- * **TREATS: NO !!! NOTHING with CHICKEN = No Greenies, No Chicken McNuggets, No Chicken scraps, etc**
NOTHING with BEEF = No Rawhide bones, No meat scraps ! **NOTHING with Peanut butter**
NOTHING with WHEAT = No Bread, No Pizza Crust, No Crackers and NO Milk Bone-type treats
NOTHING with PORK = No bacon, No pig's ears **NOTHING with DAIRY = No Cheese, No Ice Cream, No Yogurt, etc**
- *** **Read the label of any dog treats you buy** (of course, why buy treats at all if your dog likes veggies ?!) to make sure there is no chicken or beef ... or any other hidden ingredients that may trigger an allergy.
- *** **Remember: Milk Bones and Milk Bone-like treats DO NOT KEEP YOUR DOG'S TEETH CLEAN !**
- 2) **If your dog is on a chewable heartworm prevention: Do one of the following: 1) Rinse off the chewable tablet under tap water prior to giving it to wash off the flavoring (which is commonly sprayed on the outside) 2) Switch to a topical heartworm prevention or 3) switch to an injectable heartworm prevention (ProHeart 6 for 6 months of protection or ProHeart 12 for 12 months of protection).**
- 3) **Confine your dog to leash walks to keep them from wandering around and finding other food sources.**
- * **TREATS: YES !!!** For treats, give **carrots, broccoli, green beans, peas, zucchini, cucumbers, celery, cherry tomatoes**, or thinly slice a **sweet potato** and bake it in the oven to make a tasty treat (but no butter !!!)
- 4) **If giving medication to your dog, you can use VEGAN marshmallows ("Dandies" brand available at many supermarkets) to hide the pills. Gotta be VEGAN ONLY ~ No regular marshmallows !**
You can also use Almond Butter (Trader Joe's brand is the best choice) to disguise medication.
- 5) **You can offer Canned Salmon (watch for bones !) or Canned Tuna to dogs on a fish-based diet**
- 6) **Your dog can chew on a deer antler**
- 7) **If you brush your pet's teeth, use a 'vanilla mint' pet toothpaste. Do Not use poultry flavored.**
- 8) **Keep your dog out of the kitty litter**
- 9) **Prevent your dog from licking the food dish of another dog or cat.**
- 10) **Re-read #1 through #11 ... then read it again. If in doubt, leave it out !**

For CATS on a Food Allergy trial:

- 1) **Do not let your cats go outdoors since they can often find other food sources.**
- 2) **Prevent your cat from licking the food dish of another cat or dog.**

Skin infections caused by bacteria and/or yeast can cause intense itching. Watch for red or irritated areas of skin. We need to treat any skin infections to minimize itching as much as possible.

Most pets improve quickly with a diet change, but others may take weeks before they are better. But **remember that 10-15% of pets that have a food allergy may not respond to a dietary trial. And recall, too, that many dogs with food allergies ALSO have a seasonal allergy that can cause itching, scratching, chewing, etc.**

If we get a noticeable improvement, most pet owners are happy to keep their pet on the same diet, and never introduce other protein sources. But some owners want to offer other food sources, so they try to find the cause of the allergy by introducing a single protein or source of meat every 2 weeks to see what triggers an allergic reaction. Start by introducing either beef or chicken, then other ingredients as necessary. If we identify the food causing the problem, then you'll always know what to avoid.

Food allergies can be a challenge to diagnose, but a **committed, disciplined and dedicated pet owner** will certainly find a way to stick with the diet plan. The reward of your pet's comfort can be well worth the effort.