



Food Allergies

The proteins most dogs are allergic to include chicken, beef, and/or dairy. In cats, the common food allergens are beef, fish, and chicken.

NOTE: ANIMALS ARE NOT ALLERGIC TO BRAND NAMES; THEY ARE ALLERGIC TO FOOD INGREDIENTS.

This becomes important in individual case management. True grain allergies are most often not the primary cause of skin allergies in pets; it is one of the protein (meat) sources. So although grain-free diets are marketed heavily to pet owners, it is quite often overused, unnecessary and sometimes harmful to the pet's health.

It is common for a pet to have both food and an environmental component contributing to their allergies.

In dogs, the common symptoms we see are:

- Itching, scratching
- Skin infections
- Hair loss or barbering of fur
- Chronic and/or recurrent ear infections
- Chronic and/or recurrent anal gland infections/irritation
- Licking feet
- Soft bowel movements to diarrhea
- Excess & foul gas
- Wheezing and coughing

In cats, the most common symptoms we see are:

- Itching, scratching
- Hair loss or barbered fur

- Vomiting, especially intermittent, chronic vomiting
- Wheezing and coughing

Diagnosing Allergies:

While certain patterns of symptoms can be more obvious, such as itching/biting around the tail head region for flea allergies- other times it's more difficult as there can be overlap with food and environmental allergies. Allergy testing can test for the most common pollens and allergens are within our geographical region, which can be helpful knowledge. While there are tests available for food allergies, they can be quite unreliable. Therefore, a hypoallergenic food trial is the best alternative to rule out food allergies.

Food Allergies:

During a hypoallergenic food trial, the pet can have **NOTHING ELSE** other than the hypoallergenic food and water for a minimum of 6-8 weeks. If it is impossible to completely eliminate other foods from the pet's diet, then the food trial will not be accurate. Often dogs and cats with GI signs show marked improvement within a few weeks of eliminating the offending ingredients from their diet. Pets with ear infections and itchiness generally take a little longer to respond. Hypoallergenic diets are more expensive than regular foods, but if they eliminate or greatly reduce the symptoms, they will save the pet owner's money in the long run. Some good hydrolyzed diets include: Purina's HA Salmon or HA Vegetarian, and/or Royal Canin's HP or Ultimino.

Over the Counter Dog Food Options:

Some over the counter dog foods that have helped dogs with mild food sensitivities include the following:

- Purina Pro Plan Sensitive Skin and Stomach Salmon and Rice
- Purina Pro Plan Adult Shredded Blend Lamb and Rice
- NutriSource Trout and Rice
- NutriSource Lamb and Rice

Over the Counter Cat Food Options:

- Purina Pro Plan Sensitive Skin and Stomach Salmon and Rice
- Purina Pro Plan Sensitive Skin and Stomach Lamb and Rice