

Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine

FURst Aid: Allergies in Dogs and Cats

Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis & Management

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Outline

- Definitions
- Common Causes
- Common Signs
- Diagnosis
- Treatment & Management
- Prevention



Definitions



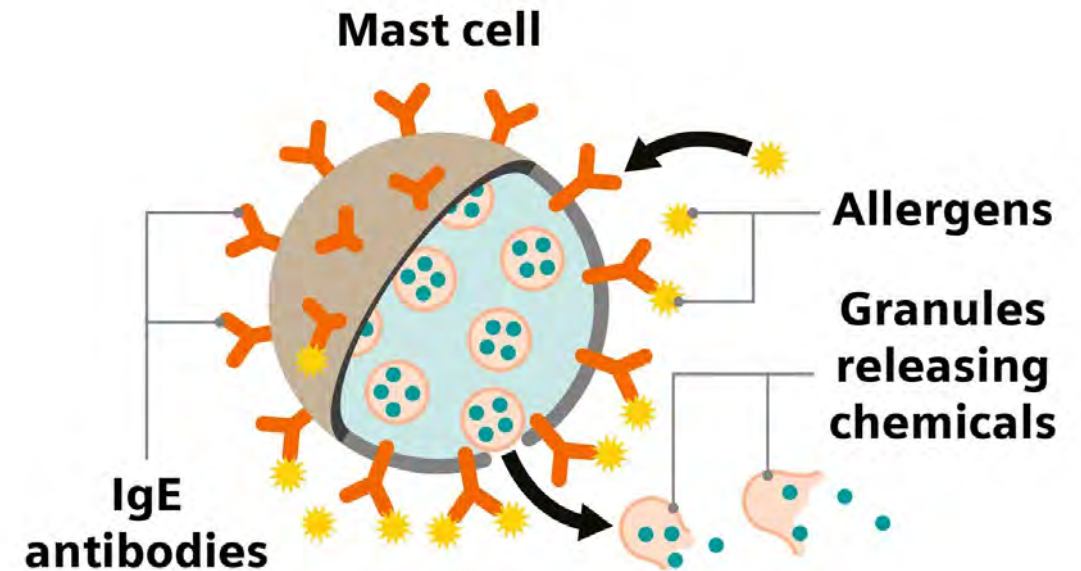
Cat (noun.)

1. A mentor in grace and independence.

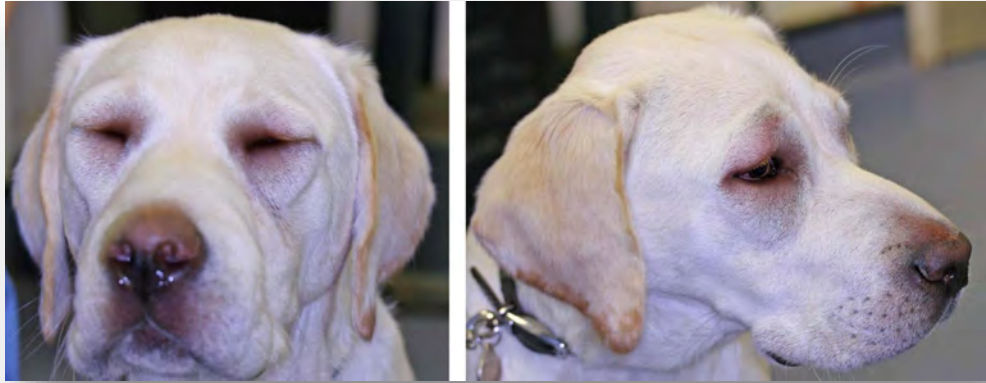
A clever companion who appreciates life's little joys and shows love through small, tender gestures. A unique creature who will leave a permanent pawprint on your heart.

What are Allergies?

- Allergy = immune system's overreaction to foreign substances
 - **Type 1** (immediate or anaphylactic) reaction
 - Type 2 (cytotoxic)
 - Type 3 (immune complex-mediated)
 - **Type 4** (delayed) reaction



Allergies can impact quality of life



Common Causes



Common Causes of Allergies in Pets

- Environmental allergies (atopy)
 - Pollens (ex: grass, trees, weeds)
 - Mold
 - Dust mites
 - Even indoor only pets can develop atopy



Common Causes of Allergies in Pets

- Flea allergies
 - Pets can be allergic to flea saliva
 - Fleas bite 3X
 - One adult female can lay up to 50 eggs/day!



Common Causes of Allergies in Pets

- Food allergies
 - Protein is the allergen
 - Beef
 - Dairy
 - Chicken
 - Wheat
 - Less common: soy, corn, egg, pork, fish
- Store bought pet food has a lot of cross contamination



Common Causes of Allergies in Pets

- Contact allergies
 - Rare
 - Can be caused by certain materials (ex: plastics) or cleaning agents (ex: shampoo, detergent)

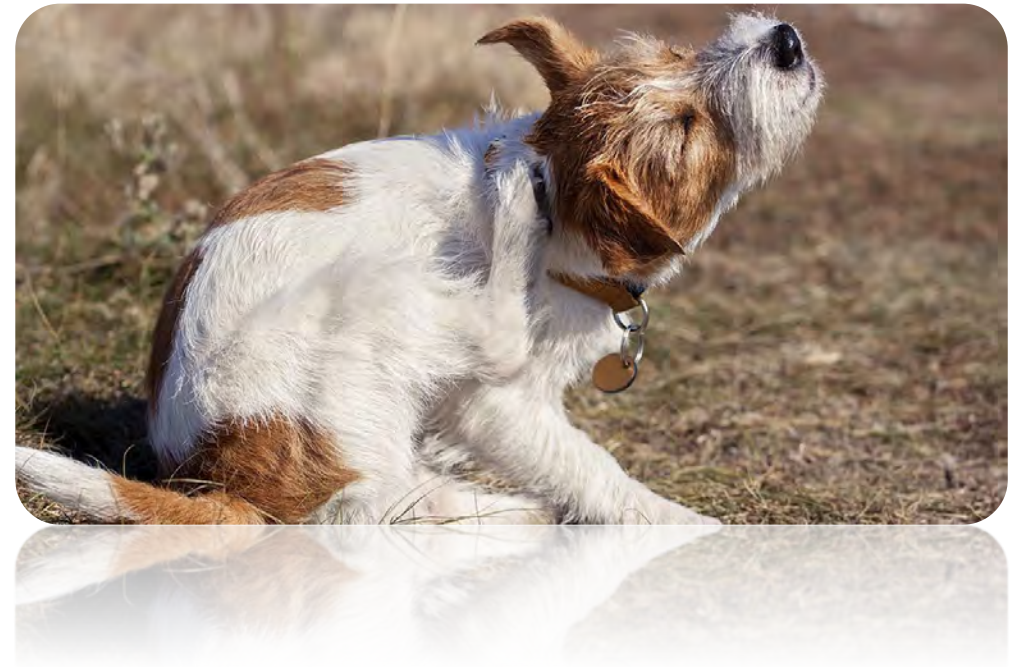


Common Signs



Common Signs of Allergies









- Constant scratching, licking, chewing
- Red or irritated skin
- Multiple ear infections
- Hair loss or hot spots
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Behavioral changes due to discomfort
 - Irritability
 - Restlessness



Is my pets stool normal?

- Warning: Picture of feces!
- When in doubt, take a photo for your vet!



PURINA FECAL SCORING CHART		
Fecal consistency is primarily a function of moisture in stool and can be used to identify changes in colon health and other problems. In a healthy dog or cat, stools ideally should be firm but not hard, pliable, segmented and easy to pick up (Score 2).		
Score	Specimen	Characteristics
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Very hard and dryOften expelled as individual pelletsRequires much effort to expel from the bodyLeaves no surface residue when picked up
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Firm, but not hard; pliableSegmented appearanceLeaves little or no surface residue when picked up
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Log shaped; moist surfaceLittle or no visible segmentationLeaves surface residue, but holds form when picked up
4		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Very moist and soggyLog shapedLeaves surface residue and loses form when picked up
5		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Very moist, but has a distinct shapePresent in piles rather than logsLeaves surface residue and loses form when picked up
6		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Has texture, but no defined shapePresent as piles or spotsLeaves surface residue when picked up
7		<ul style="list-style-type: none">WateryNo texturePresent in flat puddles
 Advancing Science for Pet Health <small>Purina trademarks are owned by Société des Produits Nestlé S.A., Vevey, Switzerland</small>		
RN/CRCE		

Diagnosis



Determine the Underlying Cause

- Rule out other causes such as parasites or infections
 - Vet may check for fleas and perform skin tests
- Detailed history and symptom timeline
- Elimination diet trials
- Intradermal skin testing or serum allergy testing (for environmental allergens)
- Allergy tests for food are less reliable – elimination diet works best!

Chronic allergies can be frustrating!

- Find a local dermatologist
 - Dr. Andrea Hasbach (Oregon Veterinary Referral Associates, Forest Grove)
 - Dr. Jon Plant (Skin Vet Clinic, Lake Oswego)
- American College of Veterinary Dermatologist
 - ACVD.org
 - Find a Dermatologist





Treatment & Management

Managing Allergies

- Flea prevention
 - Monthly treatments are key – even if you don't see fleas!
- Environmental allergies
 - Wipe paws after walks, use air filters, regular cleaning
 - Allergy shots or medications
- Food allergies
 - Try hypoallergenic or limited-ingredient diets
 - No “cheat treats” during trial!
- Bathing & skin care
 - Medicated or soothing shampoos (ask your vet)
 - Avoid overbathing (listen to your vet)

Safe At Home Treatments for Mild Cases

- Antihistamines
- Benadryl, Claritin or Zyrtec
 - Benadryl = diphenhydramine
 - Claritin = loratadine
 - Zyrtec = cetirizine
 - NO DECONGESTANT - TOXIC!
- Typically not effective for food allergy
- Might work for atopy



Apoquel

- Oclacitinib
- Janus-kinase inhibitor
- Blocks production of immune messengers (cytokines) involved in itch and inflammation
- Daily oral medication
- Side effects
 - Mild gastrointestinal effects
 - May increase susceptibility to infections such as UTI or pneumonia



Cytopoint

- Lokivetmab
- Monoclonal canonized antibody used to block IL-31 - prevents itch
- Injectable given every 4-8 weeks
- Side effects (uncommon)
 - Gastrointestinal problems
 - Pruritus or pain at injection site



Steroids & Supplements

- Steroids
 - Ex: prednisone, prednisolone, triamcinolone, dexamethasone
 - Side effects depend on dose and duration
- Supplements
 - Omega-3 fatty acids (ex: fish oil)
 - Vitamin E
 - L-lysine (for cats) maybe?

Topical Treatments



Living with an Allergic Pet

- Realistic expectations – you cannot always “cure” it but you can control it
- Expect more frequent follow up appointments with your regular veterinarian
- Know the triggers, monitor symptoms, & work with your vet



Conclusion

- Determine the underlying cause
 - Consider a food trial for 8-12 weeks
 - Write down patterns (ex: seasons, certain foods)
- Prevention is key - avoid allergens
- Make sure your pet is on flea control ALL YEAR LONG!
 - Make sure ALL of your pets (and their friends) are on flea control too



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Thank you!

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