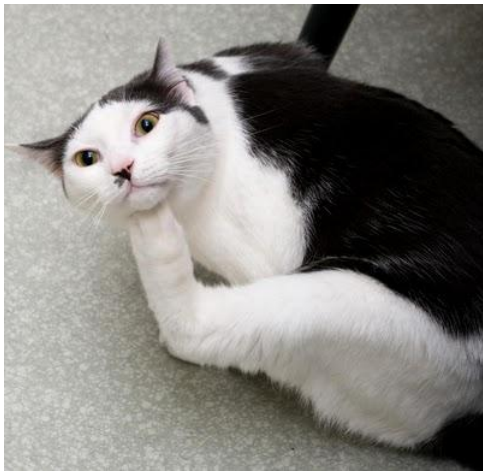


The Itchy Pet Report

- How to tell if your pet has an allergy.
- What is an allergy and what it means for your pet.
- **Three dangers to avoid.**

Itching and Allergies in Dogs and Cats

Although pets can show many responses when they're allergic to something, scratching is often the most obvious sign. Coping with an itchy pet can be an extremely frustrating experience, and can truly test your relationship with your furry family member. Persistent scratching and chewing by your pet can also result in self-damage and open wounds. The following information is intended to provide you with a basic understanding of the most common underlying causes of itching in cats and dogs.



Could your pet have an allergy?

Take the test!

Does your pet show any of these signs?

Bald patches <input type="checkbox"/>	Dandruff <input type="checkbox"/>	Chewing/licking paws or brown stains <input type="checkbox"/>
Lumpy skin <input type="checkbox"/>	Red ears <input type="checkbox"/>	Rubbing belly along the floor or grass <input type="checkbox"/>
Scratching <input type="checkbox"/>	Rubbing face <input type="checkbox"/>	Licking hair a lot in certain places <input type="checkbox"/>
Losing hair <input type="checkbox"/>	Shaking Head <input type="checkbox"/>	Chewing around the tail area <input type="checkbox"/>
Red eyes <input type="checkbox"/>	Pink or red skin <input type="checkbox"/>	Rubbing the bottom <input type="checkbox"/>

The Most Common Causes of Chronic Itching, Scratching & Unhappy pets:

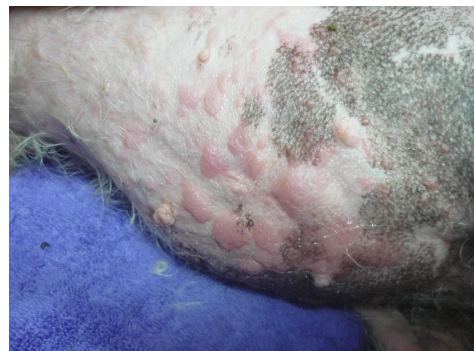
1. External Parasites ... these include fleas, mites, lice, mosquitoes, etc.
2. Allergies ... these fall into main groups: Flea Allergy, Food Allergy, and Atopic Dermatitis.
3. Infections ... these can be primary (such as the fungal infection “ringworm”) or secondary infections as a result of having other allergies.
4. Contact reactions ... (can involve allergies) to chemicals, plants and fabric. The wrong shampoo can be a major cause of skin problems.

We will often need to do pathology tests on the skin to see what kind of infections are present and whether there are parasites on or in the skin.

What are Allergies?

Allergy is a state of hypersensitivity in which exposure to a harmless substance, known as an “allergen” induces the body’s immune system to overreact. The incidence of allergies is increasing in both humans and their pets. People with allergies usually have “hay fever” (watery eyes,

Dog with hives



runny nose and sneezing) or asthma. It is not uncommon for cats to have these types of allergies too. Dogs, on the other hand, rarely show respiratory signs. More commonly, they experience the effects of allergic hypersensitivities as skin problems (including the ears and feet). By the way, dermatitis just means “inflammation of the skin”; it’s not a diagnosis, but it is a sign there’s a problem.

What are the Major Types of Allergies?

1. FLEA ALLERGY

Flea allergic dermatitis (FAD) is the most common skin disease in dogs and cats. For the flea allergic patient, 100% flea control is essential for the pet to remain symptom-free.

“But doctor, I never see fleas on my pet.” You may not see them, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t there! The allergy is caused by the flea’s saliva, and it only takes a few bites to induce the problem.

Also, the itchy pet often scratches so much that adult fleas are removed, making them hard to find.



“I do control the fleas – I comb them off every day.” Sadly that’s not enough to stop them causing a problem! They can still bite the pet and cause allergies for the other 23 hours of the day.

“If fleas are the problem, why is my pet still itchy in the winter?” In warm climates like Sydney or in our homes, fleas may survive in low numbers year round. Because flea allergy is so common, we recommend that you get fleas properly under control before proceeding with diagnostics for other allergies, and that year-round flea control be maintained for all allergy patients. It can save you money and time to take a few simple steps.

2. FOOD ALLERGY

Some pets develop specific reactions to components of their diets. The allergen usually is a major protein or carbohydrate ingredient such as beef, chicken, pork, corn, wheat, or soy. Minor ingredients, such as preservatives or dyes, are also potential allergens. The diagnosis of food allergy requires that we test your pet by



feeding special strict diets that contain only ingredients that they have never eaten before. This can be a vital step in the process of working out why your pet is itchy.

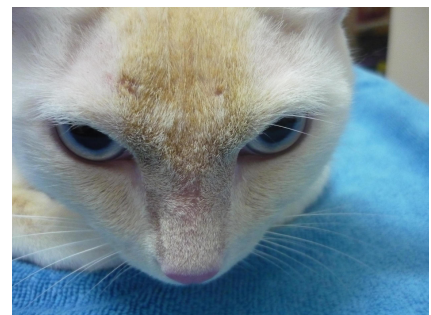
3. ATOPIC DERMATITIS

Atopic dermatitis (AD) is an inherited tendency to develop skin problems from exposure to a variety of commonplace and otherwise harmless substances including the pollens of weeds, grasses and trees, as well as house dust mites and mould spores. Diagnosis of AD is made (usually after excluding other causes of itchiness) based on the results of intradermal skin testing, which would be done by a skin specialist. The results of these tests helps them compile a list of allergens for a “vaccine” to decrease the pet’s sensitivity. Sometimes multiple skin and/or blood tests are necessary to accurately assess the patient’s allergies. Cats are rarely atopic, and special shampoos and diets can help dogs with AD cope with the symptoms.

Secondary Infections

Allergies are often the underlying cause of recurring skin and/or ear infections. Infections, though secondary, can cause an increase in your pet’s level of itching. Long-term treatment with antibiotics and anti-yeast medications is commonly required, along with medicated bathing programs.

Cat with allergy & infection



Can Allergies Be Cured?

Unfortunately, there is no cure for allergies and it is usually a life-long problem. But we can improve the quality of life for both you and your pet. We will formulate the best program of management that suits you both. We may need to do tests on the skin such as skin scrapings or cytology.

Three dangers to avoid

1. Medication side effects ... although tablets can often help stop the itch, some have serious side effects when given long term. Finding the cause is better than simply treating the symptoms.
2. Ignoring the problem ... usually the allergy gets worse with time. It is harder to treat a problem when it's more severe and has developed secondary problems, such as infections.
3. Looking for the quick fix ... it's often frustrating to treat itchy skin, **but stick to it!**