

Have you noticed your cat or dog scratching themselves more than usual, or perhaps that they have red and irritated skin? They could have allergies. This resource will help you to recognize signs of allergies in your pet and provide some information about how to help treat your pet.

Signs Your Pet May Have Allergies

- Excessive licking or chewing fur
- Repeat ear infections
- Body odour with a yeast smell
- Changes to skin, such as rashes, hives, blisters, greasy skin, scabs or hair loss
- Itching around face, neck, limbs, armpits, belly and anal area
- Gastrointestinal signs, such as gassiness, vomiting or diarrhea

Types of Allergies

Food

Like humans, animals can have immune responses to proteins and carbohydrates in food. Some common food allergies in dogs are dairy products, beef, chicken, lamb, and wheat. More common cat food allergies include beef, fish and chicken.

Environmental

When your pet's skin becomes irritated by things like pollen, dust mites, grass, mold and mildew, it's known as an environmental allergy. Your pet can also develop indoor environmental allergies caused by cleaning and scented items you use in the home.

Fleas

Fleas can cause an allergic reaction when they bite and leave saliva on the skin. It is the saliva that causes the allergic reaction in your pet.

How are Allergies Diagnosed?

If you suspect your pet has allergies it is important to first consult with your veterinarian. Depending on your pet's history and symptoms, your vet may order tests to rule out any other causes for their symptoms. This can include skin scrapes or blood tests to determine if your pet has any other condition which may affect their skin.

Other methods for diagnosing allergies include food elimination trials to figure out food allergies, irritation tests on the skin, and blood tests. Your vet may also refer you to a veterinary dermatologist.



Treatment

Always consult with a veterinarian as to how to best treat your pet's allergies. Most symptoms can be managed, and your pet can live comfortably with allergies.

Topical Treatments

Medicated baths and topical ointments can be used to help provide temporary relief from itching.

Note: Check with your vet to make sure a treatment is safe before using it on your pet. Avoid products or DIY solutions which could be painful on irritated skin, such as alcohol based or astringent solutions, like tea tree oil.

Avoidance

Once an allergen is known you may be able to adjust your pet's environment and routine to reduce their exposure and reaction to them. This can be done through avoiding certain food ingredients or specific triggers in the environment, and you may be able to replace something in the environment.

Diet

If your vet suspects your pet may have food allergies they may advise you try an elimination diet. Your vet may suggest trying foods with different protein and carbohydrate sources or a specialized diet. Alternate proteins and carbohydrates your vet may suggest could be kangaroo, rabbit, turkey, venison, oat, pea and sweet potato, for example.

Flea Control

If your pet is having a reaction to fleas, your vet may prescribe topical or oral treatments. Managing exposure to fleas in the environment can be helped by using an exterminator, sprays, and vacuuming.

Medication

There are many different treatments available to veterinarians for dealing with allergies. Prescriptions such as corticosteroids, anti-inflammatory drugs, antihistamines, allergy shots (also known as allergen specific immunotherapy), and Apoquel (for dogs only) can be prescribed to better control your pet's allergies. A vet may also recommend supplements, such as essential fatty acids to help.

Additional Resources

For more information, guides, and resources for pet guardians, please visit our website at <https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:
askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).