

## What are Allergies?

"Allergies occur when antigenic substances (allergens) enter the body and trigger a disproportionately aggressive immune response<sup>1</sup>". "Allergies are a symptom of an immune system disorder that may be related to a nutritional deficiency, or excess, steroid or antibiotic therapies, vaccinosis, or metabolic dysfunction<sup>2</sup>".

## Why the Increase in Allergies in our Pets?

Why are allergies increasing? What has changed? Since the depression, kibble based diets have been the prominent food source for our companion animals. Kibble was invented as a cheap way to feed our animals when valuable food sources were low. Little consideration was given to nutritional content.

Although some health conscious companies (such as "Nature's Logic") have improved kibble by using human grade meat sources, hormone and antibiotic free meats, and adding valuable probiotics and enzymes back into the food – the food is still processed and is still cooked. Fresh REAL foods will give your pet the tools to help fight allergies and other diseases. Without high quality fuel in the tank, the car won't run!

There has also been an increase in steroid and antibiotic use and we are vaccinating our pets on a more regular basis. All of these factors contribute to lowering immune response.

## Different types of Allergies

The most well known allergen in pets is definitely food, but surprisingly enough, it is not the most common. Atopy (allergies to inhaled substances such as pollens, dust, and molds) affects pets more often than food allergies, but is less often diagnosed. We will be discussing Atopic Dermatitis for the remainder of the article.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbs for Pets – Mary L. Wulff-Tilford and Gregory L. Tilford

<sup>2</sup> Herbs for Pets – Mary L. Wulff-Tilford and Gregory L. Tilford

## Signs of Allergies

- Itching
- Discolored Skin and Skin Lesions (due to constant trauma)
- Secondary Bacterial or Yeast Infections
- Chronic Ear Infections
- Runny Eyes
- Diarrhea
- Bronzing of Skin from Licking

With Atopic Dermatitis the areas most often affected are the paws, face, lower legs, groin and sometimes eyes and the ears. Atopic Dermatitis is a genetic disease and dogs with this disorder should not be bred, nor should their contributing parent(s) and/or offspring.

## What if it's not Allergies?

Conditions often misdiagnosed as Allergic Dermatitis: (list excerpt from "The Allergy Solution for Dogs" written by Shawn Messonnier, D.V.M.) Demodectic Mange, Sarcoptic Mange, Fleabite Hypersensitivity, other Insect Hypersensitivity, Bacterial Infection, Yeast overgrowth on the skin, Ringworm, Intestinal Parasite Hypersensitivity, Food Allergies, Contact Dermatitis, Drug Reactions, Skin Cancer, Thyroid and other hormonal diseases, and Behavioral Problems.

The majority of the above conditions stem back to low immune response (have you ever wondered why some dogs are bothered by fleas and bites, and others are not?) so no matter what the condition, providing proper support to the immune system (through fresh foods and supplements if necessary) is KEY to maintaining good health. Also, almost equally important, maintain strong and efficient digestive health.

Although it is important to rule out Mange, fleas, and other possibilities before diagnosing allergies, the treatment for fleas and other pests can also contribute to worsening the problem by affecting the immune system. If you do endure flea or other harsh treatments, please ensure that you support the liver before, during, and after treatment with a liver protecting herb like MILK THISTLE. A regular detox twice per year (preferably in the

spring and fall) with a product like "On the Trail's" DTX will help the body gently cleanse.

Malabsorption is also often overlooked. If a pet has a hard time extracting vitamins and minerals from food and supplements it could be that his body is not absorbing them properly. Without these important nutrients supporting the skin, the pet will often have itchy, dry skin, a dull coat; they may eat feces and other inappropriate items. They will often also be underweight despite eating copious amounts of food.

Strengthening the stomach and colon function (especially after long term kibble use and when adjusting to a high quality diet such as raw) with a product like "On the Trail's" ST-C can help improve digestion long term. To help in the meantime, a digestive enzyme supplement such as "Enzymes Plus" can help the body assimilate the nutrients necessary for healthy skin and body.

### Conventional Therapies - Using Drugs to Treat Atopic Dermatitis

Corticosteroids and antihistamines are the most commonly used "conventional" therapies for allergies.

Corticosteroids (eg. Prednisone) offer instant relief to an itchy pet and often within only a day or so redness and inflammation disappears. So, what's the problem? Corticosteroids do nothing to address the underlying immune system disorder and often contribute to making it worse! They also increase your pet's appetite, water intake, and urination. Long term use of the drugs can cause: kidney and liver disease, hormone irregularity, suppression of the immune system, anemia, obesity, aggression, eye problems, respiratory issues, seizures, heart problems, reproductive problems, gastrointestinal problems, the list goes on.

Antihistamines like Benadryl and Claritine are the second most recommended medication for allergies. For long term use they are preferable to corticosteroids as their side effects are not as serious. However, they are not as effective in treating itchiness once it has begun, but for some pets taken prior to itching they can give some relief. The most common side

effect of antihistamines is sleepiness. On occasion, this is ok, but long term sedation of your pet is not a good thing.

For dosage suggestions please consult with your holistic veterinarian.

### Alternative and Complementary Therapies for Allergies

Herbs, Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Essential Fatty Acids, gentle shampoos, etc - these are all possibilities for bringing your pet relief in non-evasive manner. The biggest problem with these therapies is that they do not bring instant relief - you must be patient! Not every suggestion works for every pet and sometimes it can take up to three months before a supplement can be fairly evaluated. But, once you find the combination that works for YOUR pet, they may find enough relief - without drugs - to lead a happy life!

"On the Trail's" DTX should be considered every spring and fall to help the body's natural seasonal detox. If there are current allergy symptoms, DTX helps rid the body of metabolic waste and helps pets that may have recently been exposed to anesthesia, pain meds, chemo or radiation, steroids, flea and heart worm agents, vaccinations, and pesticides.

"On the Trail's" - Neem+ contains herbs that support the skin in eliminating toxins and the organ systems that support the skin. It is great for inflammatory skin irritations, dandruff, and allergic reactions to external irritants.

It may be worthwhile to have your pet tested to find out exactly what they are allergic to. Once you find out, you can take measures to help reduce their exposure to their allergen. For example, if you know your pet is allergic to household dust - frequent bathing with gentle shampoos containing anti-inflammatory herbs (such as "On the Trail's" - Herbal Shampoo) can help sooth the skin and remove the offending allergen from their body. Also, adding a furnace filter and frequent vacuuming (preferably when your pet is not home) can also help.

### Role of EFAs (Essential Fatty Acids)

Adding Omega 3 oil (preferably in the form of fish body oil) is essential to any allergy regime. Evening Primrose Oil is an EFA that contains GLA (gamma-linolenic acid). GLA helps inhibit the body's production of the chemicals that cause inflammation. It can also help decrease inflammation that causes itchy skin.

### Role of Stress

Because stress can take a toll on the body's immune system, it can exacerbate the effects of allergies. Try "Bach Flower Remedies" tailored to your pet's specific situation to try and help them cope with their stress. "Rescue Remedy" is a good all around flower essence that can help with stressful situations.

Also, CHAMOMILE GLYCERITE can be tried for a three month period for itching and shedding associated with stress, or "On the Trail's" NRV can be tried to help support the nervous system in nervous pets.

### Vaccinating Atopic Pets

Anything foreign to your pet's body can help to tip their delicate immune system out of balance. If your pet is suffering from allergies (or unhealthy in any way) some feel it is best to not vaccinate until things are under control.

Many vets have turned to titers to determine an animal's antibody levels to a certain disease before administering a vaccination. If vaccines are a must then ask to have them broken down into individual shots (instead of combos) that can be given at different intervals rather than all at once. They DO exist but not all vet offices have them on hand. You may have to special order them or find a vet who will. Also, ensure the body's immune system is prepared by adding supplements before and after vaccines. A homeopathic called "Thuya" has been beneficial to some patients by helping the body rid itself of toxins after vaccine therapy.

Many people with Atopic pets have opted out of further vaccinations as the risks to administering them outweigh the risks of not. This is a decision that has to be made by a pet owner and their holistic veterinarian.

### Where do you Start?

Each animal will have a protocol suited to their specific needs. It is difficult to say exactly what will work for each pet. Switching to a high quality diet and consulting with a holistic veterinarian or practitioner may be a good place to start.

To View the Entire Article (also included: Conventional vs Alternative therapies, Role of EFAs and Stress, Vaccinating Atopic Pets, and Where do you Start?) please visit: <http://www.tailblazerscopperfield.com/articles.htm>

For fresh pet foods, supplements, supplementation and diet suggestions please visit the Copperfield Tail Blazers.

In the Next Issue, I will be discussing "Flower Essences for Animals"

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References: "Herbs for Pets" - Mary L. Wulff-Tilford and Gregory L. Tilford  
"The Allergy Solution for Dogs" - Shawn Messonnier, D.V.M.  
"On the Trail's" - Product Brochure - Tara Martinson  
"Urban Carnivore's" - Product Brochure

The advice in this article should in no way replace regular health care from a qualified holistic veterinarian.