

ALLERGIC SKIN DISEASE

What are the clinical signs and details?

Certain animals are genetically predisposed to develop allergic skin disease. Allergic skin disease results in itchy, inflamed skin. The skin is often reddened, the hair may fall out causing baldness, and the coat may be dry and flaky or oily and smelly. Inflamed skin is susceptible to secondary bacterial and fungal infection, causing pustules or “hot spots”. These secondary infections require treatment, but the underlying allergic cause (or causes) must be identified and if possible eliminated e.g. fleas. All animals are different in the way they respond to allergens, and need different treatment. Follow up examinations ensure your pet is responding to treatment, as the skin may take several weeks to recover.

What are the main types of allergies?

- **CONTACT ALLERGY:** Commonly to grass, but also disinfectants and carpet cleaners, shampoos and other products applied to the animal’s coat.
- **FLEAS**
- **FOOD ALLERGY:** Usually to the protein source in the animal’s food. An elimination diet is recommended for a 3 month trial to see if the cause of the allergy is your dog’s diet. It is important that **NO OTHER FOOD** is given during this time e.g. snacks, treats, milk etc. If the skin is still itchy after 3 months, then a food allergy is unlikely. If the skin is not itchy, this diet can be continued long term. Alternatively, you can try “challenging” with one type of food at a time. Add the “challenge” food to the diet for 3 weeks, if no itchiness occurs; it is safe to give this food.
- **ATOPY:** The allergens are absorbed across the skin and are environmental and include weed, tree and grass pollens, moulds and various mites.

How to treat Allergic Skin Disease?

All animals are different in the way they respond to allergens, and need different treatment. The following is a list of commonly used medications.

- **Corticosteroids:** these drugs work by stopping the initial inflammation of the skin which results in redness, heat and itchiness. Cortisone is sometimes used at the initial treatment once an allergic cause has been identified; occasionally it is required long term. It is associated with side effects at high dosages given long term or with abrupt withdrawal from the drug, so it is important to gradually taper off the drug after an initial “loading period”. Side effects include increase in thirst and hunger, liver damage and incontinence.
- **Immunotherapy:** this involves intra-dermal skin tests to identify allergens and preparation of special injections to give to the patient.
- **Antibiotics and Antifungals:** to treat secondary bacterial and fungal infections.
- **Antihistamines:** are sometimes beneficial instead of, or in conjunction with corticosteroids and/or Fatty Acid supplements
- **Shampoos:** may be prescribed depending on the skin pathology involved e.g. antibacterial, hypoallergenic or antifungal.
- **Mineral/ Fatty Acid Supplements:** can influence the inflammatory mediators in the skin cell membrane. While seldom sufficient to stop the problem alone they are a useful and safe adjunct to treatment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONSULT YOUR VET

皮膚過敏症

臨床症狀

皮膚過敏是因為先天性基因影響發展而成。

皮膚過敏症會引致皮膚發炎及痕癢，繼而令皮膚紅腫、毛髮脫落、禿光、表皮乾燥及有頭皮或過油膩及有異味。

皮膚發炎是受到併發細菌及真菌感染，最初的療程是針對併發的感染，但根本的過敏源頭是需要確認或排除，否則痕癢等症狀不會好轉。

所有動物對不同的致敏原會產生不同的反應，所需的療程亦有不同。所以持續的跟進是必須的，讓獸醫清楚知道寵物對療程的反應，以便作出調整，而這可能需要數週才能達到預期效果。

過敏症的種類

- **接觸性過敏** - 最常見是接觸草類後引起，但如寵物身上接觸到消毒化學品、地毯清潔劑、沖涼液或其他產品，都可能會引起敏感。
- **對跳蚤過敏**
- **食物過敏** - 通常是對食物中的蛋白質過敏。要測試是否食物過敏，寵物需要被餵食一種處方特別糧，**為期三個月，最重要是在這段期間內，不可以餵食任何其他食物**，包括零食小吃、牛奶等。如果三個月後，皮膚仍然痕癢，沒有改善，我們已經可以排除食物過敏的可能性。如果皮膚不再痕癢，寵物可以長期食用處方特別糧。
- **過敏性皮膚炎** - 是皮膚吸收了環境中的致敏原，如雜草、樹木的花粉、黴菌及各種塵蹣而引起。

皮膚過敏症的療程

所有動物對致敏原都有不同的反應，所以需要的療程亦有所不同。以下是最普遍用於皮膚過敏症的藥物：

- **類固醇** - 這類藥物用於停止皮膚發炎初期所出現的紅腫及痕癢。類固醇有時可長期用於已確診的皮膚敏感症上，副作用可能會出現於長期服用高劑量或突然停止服用，所以必須根據醫生指示，有須要時要慢慢減低藥份。副作用包括食慾及飲水量大增、肝臟受到破壞及小便失禁等。
- **過敏源減敏治療** - 開始療程前，先須要接受皮下測試，以確定致敏原，繼而製造對該致敏原的疫苗為動物注射。
- **抗生素及抗真菌藥** - 用於治療由細菌及真菌引起的感染。
- **抗組胺劑** - 有時可代替或可與皮質類固醇/ 脂肪酸補充劑一同使用。
- **沖涼液** - 根據不同的病症，可處方如抗菌、防敏感或抗真菌的沖涼液。
- **礦物質/ 脂肪酸補充劑** - 能夠有效地影響皮膚細胞的炎症。雖然不能根治皮膚問題，但仍然是一安全而有用的療程。

欲知道更多有關詳情，可請教你的獸醫