

# Understanding and Treating Allergies

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**Allergy** – A hypersensitive state acquired through exposure to a particular allergen, re-exposure bringing to light an altered capacity to react.

**Food Allergy, Gastrointestinal Allergy** - Allergy usually manifested by a skin reaction, in which the ingested antigens include food as well as drugs.

**Allergen** – A substance capable of inducing allergy or hypersensitivity. The purified protein of some food, bacterium, or pollen, used to test hypersensitivity to certain substances.

Allergies are one of the most common problems plaguing our animals today. Since the 60's there has been an alarming rise in the number and types of allergies our animals are experiencing. The conventional approach has been to treat these issues with steroids and antibiotics to help suppress the immune system thus masking or pushing the allergic symptoms further down into the animal's body and ultimately causing damage to other organ systems such as the kidneys and liver. Long-term use of steroids can create added health problems, which include increased thirst, elevated blood sugar, fluid retention, behavioral changes, slower healing times, Cushing's disease, muscle wasting and leaching of calcium from the bones. Long-term antibiotic therapy can trigger yeast infections.

Most of our animals have compromised, underdeveloped and overactive immune systems. This is due primarily to a diet consisting entirely of processed foods. It has been estimated that one third of all allergic reactions are triggered by food. The most common food allergies result from exposure to wheat, corn, soy, beef, beef by-products, yeast, and dairy products. The primary ingredients of processed pet foods are poor quality grains and animal or meat by-products. Other stressors which contribute to the increase in allergic reactions include exposure to harsh cleaning products, pesticides, fertilizers and vaccinations. Research shows that the immune system reacts to the meat extracts in which the vaccines are cultured. Ingesting meats with similar proteins can trigger an allergic reaction. The most common meat extracts used in vaccinations are chicken and beef thus setting our animals up for chicken and beef allergies. Often, after exhausting conventional or allopathic approaches to treatment with little success toward relief or cure, many animal guardians are turning to alternative treatments.

## **The Alternative Approach**

Addressing allergies as a symptom of another underlying disease process rather than a root cause, allows for more treatment options, preserves and supports other organ systems and ultimately can provide maximum relief for the animal. Allergic reactions are generally caused by a strong reaction of the immune system to a foreign protein. Inflammation is a result of the immune system's reaction to this foreign protein. Common allergic symptoms include rashes, hot spots, dermatitis, inflammation of the eyes, ears and respiratory system, as well as conjunctivitis, colitis and diarrhea. The goal of treatment should be to detoxify the body while supporting and balancing the immune system.

## Treatment

1. Begin feeding a fresh food diet. For many animals the change from processed foods to fresh foods will eliminate most if not all allergy symptoms. The following is a list of foods to include as well as avoid when working with your animal's allergies.

Foods to Include	Foods to Avoid
<p><b><u>Animal Proteins:</u></b> Lamb Venison Fish Turkey</p>	<p><b><u>Animal Proteins:</u></b> Beef Chicken</p>
<p><b><u>Green Vegetables:</u></b> Dark Leafy Greens: Romaine Lettuce Dandelion Greens Carrot Tops Kale Spinach Asparagus Broccoli Celery Cucumbers Summer Squash - Yellow and Green. Basil Parsley</p>	<p><b><u>Grains:</u></b> Wheat Corn Barley Brown Rice White Rice <b><u>Grain Based Treats and Snacks:</u></b> Biscuits Breads Pasta Hot dogs often contain grain products</p>
<p><b><u>Grain and Dairy Free Supplements:</u></b> Vitamin C - boost the immune system Digestive Enzymes Co-Q10 – cellular enzyme Raw Garlic - natural antifungal and antibiotic Organic Apple Cider Vinegar Salmon Oil Vitamin E Cold Pressed, Extra Virgin, Olive Oil</p>	<p><b><u>Root Vegetables:</u></b> Beets Carrots Potatoes Sweet Potatoes <b><u>Fruits:</u></b> Apples, Bananas, Cantaloupe, Grapes <b><u>Sugars:</u></b> Honey Molasses</p>

2. The Elimination Diet – Some animals are hyper-reactive to so many proteins you might have to begin with just one food type and then each week add something new to the diet. Making careful notes and observations regarding the response to each new food.
3. Rinses which help to alleviate itching –
  - a. Calendula Cream
  - b. Mixture of 3/4-cup witch hazel to ¼ cup aloe (witch hazel decreases the itching while aloe promotes healing and is soothing to the skin)
  - c. Lemon Rinse – place sliced lemons in a gallon of water and let sit for a few days.
4. Choose a veterinarian with whom both you and your animal are comfortable. Discuss vaccination protocols, diet options and treatment plans.
5. Learn about allergies and treatment protocols. Be your pet's advocate.