

## **Treating Seasonal Allergies in Your Pet**

By Dr. Karen Becker

Hi, this is Dr. Karen Becker, and today we're going to discuss treating seasonal allergies in pets. Humans who suffer from seasonal allergies usually have symptoms involving the respiratory tract, like sniffing, sneezing, coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties. But when a dog or cat has allergies, the symptoms more often show up as a condition called allergic dermatitis, which is irritation or inflammation of the skin.

### **Manifestations**

A pet with allergies is usually very itchy. He'll scratch excessively. He might bite or chew on a certain part of his body or be generally irritated. He's probably also prone to rubbing his body against furniture or the carpet as he tries to relieve the miserable itchy feeling that he has.

As the itching and scratching progress, the skin could become inflamed and tender. There might be areas of hair loss, open sores, and scabs.

If your pet is a dog, he can develop hotspots – although cats can get them, it's certainly more rare in kitties – which are inflamed, infected areas of skin resulting from overgrowth of normal bacteria. Hotspots are typically red and very angry-looking. They kind of ooze pus, and they can develop very, very quickly. Frequently, they cause bleeding and hair loss in the patch of skin that the infection is occurring on.

Pets with seasonal allergies, especially dogs, oftentimes will have additional problems with their ears. The ear canals can become itchy and inflamed as a part of the generalized allergic response. They can also become infected with yeast and bacteria. Symptoms of a possible ear infection include scratching at the ears, aggressive headshaking, hair loss around the ears, certainly a stinky odor coming from the ears, and of course, discharge from the ears.

Another thing to watch out for, if you suspect your pet may have allergies, is generalized redness, which means your pet can become red anywhere – red puffy eyes, red oral tissue, a red chin, red muzzle, red paws, a red belly or inner thighs, and even a red anus or tail base.

Respiratory symptoms aren't common in dogs and cats with allergies, but they're certainly not unheard of. Much like an allergic human, your dog or cat may have a runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, or coughing. Pets with seasonal allergies to pollens, grasses, ragweed, and molds also tend to develop sensitivity to other inhaled allergens. Animals with a weakness in the lung fields can develop sinusitis and bronchitis just as people do.

### **What Makes An Allergy-Friendly Diet?**

The first thing I do for any pet, especially a dog or cat with allergies, is to address the diet and the possibility of leaky gut syndrome occurring. Oftentimes dysbiosis, which is also called leaky gut, is the reason seasonal allergies get progressively worse from one year to the next. For more information on leaky gut, take a look at my video on dysbiosis.

Pets with allergies should be transitioned to an anti-inflammatory diet, if they aren't already on one. Foods that create or worsen inflammation are high in carbohydrates. Your allergic pet's diet should be very low in grain content and absolutely potato-free.

If you adhere to Chinese food energetics or Chinese food theory and their principles, then you will also avoid feeding "energetically warm" or hot foods during the periods of inflammation in your pet. This means avoiding chicken and beef as protein sources.

Omega-3 fatty acids can decrease inflammation throughout the body. Adding them into the diet of all pets, particularly pets struggling with seasonal environmental allergies, is a very beneficial idea. The best sources of omega-3 are krill oil, salmon oil, tuna oil, anchovy oil, sardine oil, and other fish body oils. Just to remind you: cod liver oil does not provide enough EFAs for pets. It's only a really good source of vitamins A and D.

I also recommend coconut oil for allergic pets. Coconut oil contains lauric acid, which helps decrease the production of yeast in the body. Using fish body oil with coconut oil can help moderate or even suppress the inflammatory response.

### **How to Deal With Your Pet's Allergies Naturally**

Because allergies are an immune system response, it's important to keep your pet's immune function optimal. This means avoiding unnecessary vaccines and drugs. Pets suffering with allergies should not be vaccinated during an allergic flare-up. Vaccines stimulate the immune system which is the last thing your pet needs with an allergy issue. I recommend, instead, talking to your holistic vet about titers to measure your pet's immunity to core diseases as an alternative to automatically vaccinating.

Pets that go outside regularly are basically furry sweepers. They're collecting millions of allergens each time that they run around outside in your yard.

"Irrigation therapy," which is the fancy word for rinsing your pet off, can provide immediate relief for itchy irritated skin. Frequent baths also wash away allergens on the coat and skin. It's very important that you use a grain-free shampoo. No oatmeal shampoos if you have allergic pets.

Foot soaks are also a great way to reduce the amount of allergens your pet tracks into the house and spreads all over her indoor environment. If your pet is prone to licking and chewing her feet, this is a great way to reduce the potential for infected nail beds, Interdigital cysts, and inflamed, swollen pads.

I've had dozens of clients in my practice set up a foot soak outside their back door and do a quick parade through the soothing, disinfecting wash each time their pet comes in from outside. And believe it or not, this simple trick has kept many of my seasonal allergy patients off of medications for the entire summer just by rinsing off their feet on a consistent basis.

Eye rinses specifically for pets can provide relief for itchy eyes. But it's very important that you never use a human medicated eye drop without your vet's consent. There is a great over-the-counter, all-natural eye rinse by Halo Pets that can reduce eye irritation. I would recommend that in place of any type of drug or human eye drop for certain.

It's important to keep the areas of your home where your pet spends most of his or her time as allergen-free as possible as well. Vacuuming and cleaning floors as well as pet bedding is part of helping to

reduce the amount of allergens in the environment. Obviously using non-toxic cleaning agents rather than household cleaners that would contain chemicals is also beneficial.

Investing in an air purifier to remove allergens inside the house is a great idea for allergic pets. Covering your pet beds with dust mite covers that can be frequently washed can also help reduce allergen contamination that your pet may be bringing in from the outside.

There are a few supplements that I routinely prescribe for pets with seasonal allergic issues. Quercetin is a bioflavonoid with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and other wonderful properties. In fact, I call it "Nature's Benadryl," because it's very effective at suppressing histamine release. Histamine is what causes the inflammation, redness, and irritation associated with an allergic response.

Bromelain and papain are proteolytic enzymes that increase absorption of quercetin, making it more effective. I like to combine quercetin, bromelain, and papain together because they have a great synergistic effect, and they suppress prostaglandin release, which in turn decreases the pain and inflammation of irritated mucus membranes and body parts.

I also frequently recommend a product called HistoPlex-AB by Biotics Research. This is a blend of standardized herbal extracts with immunomodulating effects. I also use a lot of Moducare by Thorne Research to help modulate the overactive immune system.

Eucalyptus oil can be healing to mucus membranes. And diffusing the oil around allergic dogs has proven to be pretty beneficial in most instances.

I also sell locally produced honey at my clinic. Local honey contains small amounts of pollen from the local area that can help desensitize the body to local allergens. The honey I sell has been proven to be really effective at decreasing seasonal allergic responses in dogs and cats living in the Chicago area. The best place to pick up local honey is from a farmers' market in your area.

Pets can also receive desensitization injections (allergy shots) like allergic humans do. But many pet owners opt for oral drops instead. Studies show that sublingual drops, which are the under-the-tongue variety, can be just as effective as the injections.

I do use a product that's based off of local allergen load called RESPIT therapy. My clients really have appreciated this, especially in light of having to give regular desensitization shots to their pets.

If you're lucky enough to live around an NAET practitioner, they, too, can offer a non-toxic means of allergy elimination.

The more your pet is exposed to allergens that she's sensitive to, the more intense and long-lasting her allergic response will become. With my regular patients (that means those who have started out life being part of my patients; I saw them very, very young), I certainly recommend beginning to address potential root causes at the first sign of any type of allergic response, which usually occurs around six to 12 months of age. I address symptoms immediately. I do this because I want to identify and reduce the risk of an escalating response occurring year after year.

Whether your pet is young or an adult, I hope that this video has given you some potentially helpful recommendations as you look for ways to relieve the suffering of your allergic dog or cat.

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