

Facebook Live on Fleas, Ticks and Allergies

By Dr. Karen Becker

Hi, guys. Hi, Facebook family. Today I put together a very special Facebook for everyone covering really important topics for spring. I have been in six time zones in two and a half weeks. I will tell you Finland did not feel like spring.

Hi, Dr. Björkman, if you're watching. Dr. Björkman took me to the frozen Baltic Sea where they chop a hole in the middle, and then for spring, everyone jumps in for a refreshing tonic. I didn't do that. There was not much spring there in Finland. But I just flew in this morning from Fort Lauderdale and it was very spring in the Southern United States. Wherever you are joining me from, thank you.

Today, we are covering fleas, ticks and allergies. Those are springtime issues. Some of you are little more behind this season when it comes to spring, but spring is coming. Wherever you live and if you have dogs that go outside or if you have kitties that are indoor-outdoor kitties and even sometimes if you have strictly indoor kitties, you can end up with external parasites that you're not looking for.

Causes of Heightened Risk to External Parasites

When it comes to the flea-tick discussion that I have with all of my clients, the first thing I tell my clients is parasites are attracted to the weakest of the species. Now, you have to take that with a little bit of common sense. What we do know about fleas and ticks is even when you have an infested house, it's fascinating because I have clients that have a dozen kitties or they do kitty rescue, and within a very small space, they have one or two cats that are totally loaded and infested, and some cats may only have one or two fleas. It's very interesting.

We know that nutritional status, skin pH, vitality, gut biome – we know that there are a lot of things that play into an animal's immune system response and their immunologic ability to address external parasites. All that to say, we want to focus on keeping your dogs and cats as vibrantly healthy on the inside as possible, because that's going to make them less attractive and less hospitable to external parasites.

I can't stress enough how much diet plays into your pet's immunologic response. That being said, the more fresh, living, whole, unadulterated foods that you feed your dogs or cats, the more healthy species-appropriate nutrition that you are offering your dogs and cats, is allowing them to not only absorb and process the nutrients they need to have a functional healthy immune system, but those key specific benefits from fresh foods, like phytonutrients, enzymes and antioxidants that are only found in unadulterated foods,

are at your dog's and cat's beck and call when they're eating a species-appropriate living food diet.

Brewer's Yeast and Garlic Pills for Your Pets?

Now, for those of you that can't feed an all-living food diet, you could add in some things that can certainly help bolster your pet's immune system. One thing that was very popular through the '70s – every now and then I still have clients that come in and say, "Hey, I'm going to give brewer's yeast and garlic pills." I am not a big fan of brewer's yeast and garlic pills for a bunch of reasons.

First of all, brewer's yeast is pretty allergenic. In fact, the top conditions I see as a doctor are cancer and allergies. I see so many allergies. We're going to cover allergies in a few minutes. But I see so many allergies that I would never recommend intentionally feeding a supplement that could be quite allergenic. Brewer's yeast is very allergenic.

Now, if you have a dog or cat that has no allergies, you might be able to skate by giving brewer's yeast. But then the question you should ask is, "What's in brewer's yeast that actually has a functional response in repelling fleas and ticks?" Believe it or not, it's all those B vitamins. Brewer's yeast is one of the very best sources of B vitamins.

For that reason, I like the concept of giving Bs because those of you that are in the nutraceutical and supplement industry know that, unfortunately, the majority of B vitamins found in supplements, capsules or pills are all coming from China. Most of the B vitamins that you see in supplements are not necessarily healthfully sourced. They're absolutely not made in the United States. I'm not a big fan of synthetic B vitamins.

However, I'm not a big fan of brewer's yeast because of the allergenic potential, and because so many dogs and cats have allergies. Brewer's yeast actually is like putting gas on a fire, especially if you've got yeasty pets. Yeasty pets, feeding them more yeast in terms of brewer's yeast, you're just going to really accelerate those red, itchy, stinky inflamed paws, ears and other parts of their bodies that are fostering yeast.

Instead, think about food sources that are very, very rich in the B vitamins. That would be fresh, living, whole unadulterated meats, which the good news is dogs and cats are carnivores and they were meant to consume meat. Even if you're feeding kibble, your just taking a chunk of kibble out and putting in a chunk of fresh, balanced, living fresh food that of course are meat-based would be a great way to get whole food living B-vitamins into your dogs or cats.

Now, garlic. I'm also not a big fan of garlic supplements. The big reason I'm not a fan of garlic supplements is that – Garlic is pretty cool. When you look at garlic, it's just sitting

on the counter. It's not active. The active medicinal properties have not been activated, which is why when you break off a clove of garlic, or even when you smell a bulb of garlic, it's not profoundly stinky.

Garlic is made up of two inactive compounds within each clove, alliin and alliinase. Alliin and alliinase, when you cut, crush or chop a clove of garlic, a chemical reaction occurs. Allicin, the active medicinal compound in garlic, is created. That chemical reaction that creates the medicinal compound in garlic lasts about eight hours. Even though garlic that has been chopped and processed may smell like garlic that you buy in the jar at the grocery store, that active medicinal, magical component of garlic that's anticancer, anti-parasitic, antibacterial and antiviral, all those beautiful properties are gone.

You end up with a kind of aromatic spice, but the medicinal components have really been inactivated, because this reaction occurs for a short time, and then it's gone. My suggestion, if you're interested in using whole foods to help fight parasites, is that you get a fresh clove of garlic and add it to your pet's food.

Now, here's the issue with garlic. Some of you are saying, "Dr. Becker, garlic is toxic to pets." I printed off the paper in 2000, "Hematologic Changes Associated with Administration of Garlic Extract in Dogs." What this paper proves is that if you are giving tremendous amounts of garlic – in fact, the paper says 5 grams per kilogram of dogs – that equates to about 12 cloves of garlic, eight to 12 cloves of garlic for an 8 to 10 pound dog, which is a bulb.

If you're giving a bulb of garlic to your Chihuahua – first of all, your Chihuahua's probably not going to eat it. That's common sense. But second of all, that's too much garlic, guys. But here's what's interesting. Even at super high levels of, in fact, unnaturally high levels of garlic that dogs and cats would never eat, they still didn't develop any hemolytic anemia. Even at these super high levels, this toxic effect that can occur when you feed dogs way too much garlic actually wasn't occurring.

All that to say, you can give quite a bit of garlic to dogs and cats and not worry about hemolytic anemia. The commonsense thing is to add it in medicinal quantities on a daily basis during flea and tick season. My recommendation is about a quarter of a teaspoon of freshly chopped garlic for every 15 pounds of dog. For kitties, I do about 1/16th of a teaspoon, a teeny-tiny pinch of freshly chopped garlic, and about 1/8th of a teaspoon for toy dogs.

Adding that into their food on a daily basis is 70 times less than any type of scary dose that tends to provide that beautiful chemical reaction that is anti-parasitic, anti-tick, anti-flea, anti-internal parasites, because that active compound is absorbed into your pet's skin and your pet's gastrointestinal (GI) tract and actually ends up on your pet's skin. It's very unpalatable for external parasites. Rather than using brewer's yeast and garlic

pills, my suggestion is that you use the real thing – living, whole, fresh medicinal food in the form of garlic.

I'm going to touch on foods in just a few minutes when I talk about allergies, but the premise is the healthier you can create vibrant health in your dog or cat by using healthy foods, the less attractive they will be to external parasites.

Natural Deterrents for External Parasites

Now, all that to say, if you are stuck in Florida where you never have a really hard frost – the nice thing about Chicago is from about end of November until sometimes end of February, we get some freezing temperatures. That makes parasites not so common during the winter. If you live in the southern half of the United States, you guys are bombarded with parasites constantly.

There are some situations where you cannot use natural products and not end up with a problem. I have found that even to be true when I'm hiking in Chicago. That when I go deep into the woods – I have a pretty vibrantly healthy immune system, and so do my dogs, but we will come out with ticks crawling on us. Not because we're toxic or sick, but because we were deep in the woods and there are thousands of ticks that are going to drop and fall onto us. Sometimes, it's a matter of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

But all that to say, when we're looking at minimizing exposure to fleas and ticks on a regular basis, there are some commonsense things you can do around the environment, without using toxins. Now, some of you say, "My gosh. I'm in Florida, I have been totally infested. The only way I'm capable of helping to reduce infestations of fleas in my house is using topical chemicals."

Guys, sometimes you're left having to use chemicals. I get it. But if you are using chemicals, then I want you to think about doing some form of detox. I use milk thistle. I created a detox. In fact, I regularly recommend that if you're going to use chemicals of any kind, you use some kind of detox. Use milk thistle. Use something after you're putting chemicals on your dog's or cat's body to help their liver get rid of those chemicals.

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But the other thing you can do is – let's say your veterinarian is saying apply a spot-on pesticide every month year round – oftentimes, you can get by every other month, using pesticide, natural pesticide, natural. One of the things that a lot of people will do is if you are using a traditional pesticide collar, you could switch to an essential oil collar for your dog.

On a day to day basis around your backyard, if you're in a condo, you can put an essential oil collar on your dog for walks around your neighborhood. Then when you go deep in the woods for three or four days when you're camping and you're in a really hot bed of tick area, if you wanted to switch to something stronger at that time where the risk is higher, some veterinarians will tell you, "Here's something stronger that you can use." But all that to say, if your risk is low, keep the chemicals very, very low. If your risk is higher, then you need to be more diligent about what you're doing, especially when it comes to tick checks

On those days when your risk is low, then I'm going to show you how to make a really quick homemade, around-the-house, general flea and tick deterrent. Now, this brings me to my next point. Deterrents versus preventives.

Deterrents versus Preventives

I'm going to talk about making a deterrent, an all-natural deterrent, that I'm going to show you how to do. It takes two seconds. This deterrent will – instead of your dogs getting 60 ticks, they make it 10. Deterrents are all-natural. They're awesome because they don't cause cancer, seizures or liver toxicosis. Yay. Preventives, you're getting from conventional veterinarians. They are pesticides and toxic. I'm not bashing them. Sometimes we have to use them. But preventives are strong chemicals with significant side effects.

Preventives are hailed to prevent ticks and fleas. Period. Deterrents reduce the likelihood of getting fleas and ticks, but they're not a guarantee. I bring that up because when you guys are using natural substances, sometimes people say, "Oh my gosh. I used your flea and tick spray, and my dog got a tick." Well, guys, you have to remember that if you are in an endemic area, you should be checking yourself too, because you can get ticks.

In my opinion, believe it or not, if I had to choose between a flea infestation and getting a lot of ticks, I would pick the fleas. Fleas are gross and disgusting, but the worst case scenario from fleas really is maybe tapeworms. Ticks, guys, ticks harbor life-threatening infections. Ticks are scary. I'm much more petrified of ticks than I am of fleas. You need to be checking yourself for ticks if you're in that area, because ticks carry a whole host of diseases that can kill you and kill your dogs and cats.

Cats, for whatever reason, are much more resistant. Way to go, kitties. But all that to say, you need to be doing something on a consistent basis to reduce the attraction of external parasites to your dogs and cats.

Here is my dog recipe: Eight ounces of pure water, 4 ounces of apple cider vinegar – I like to use organic, unfiltered apple cider vinegar – 10 drops of neem oil. Now guys,

neem oil, believe it or not, is not an essential oil. Neem oil is expelled or pressed, kind of like [how] olive oil is expelled or pressed. That's why it's safe for kitties. I'm going to get to my kitty recipe in a minute. But neem oil is really, really nice because fleas and ticks hate it. But it's really great for animals that are very sensitive to smells. Ten drops neem oil and then 10 drops of catnip oil. I'll get to more about that later.

Catnip oil has been proven to be as effective as diethyltoluamide (DEET), the mosquito and tick spray that humans use with all of those toxic side effects. The nice thing about this blend is that you can get a lot of those benefits without any of the toxicosis.

If you want to add in extra one-two punch for dogs only, you can add five drops of lemon oil, lemongrass oil, eucalyptus or geranium [oil]. I use geranium oil a lot because I find it to be effective. I use it in my natural flea and tick products for Mercola, because I find it to be really, really effective. If you have a dog that has a lot of potential for ticks, adding five drops of a one-two punch of one of those essential oils is a really nice benefit. That's my recipe.

Maya has already put my 8 ounces of water in my spray bottle. You're going to watch how not scientific I am. I'm going to add 4 ounces of apple cider vinegar. Apple cider vinegar in and of itself, guys, is absolutely anti-parasitic. Fleas and ticks both do not like the smell of apple cider vinegar. I'm going to add 10 drops of neem oil. See how I measure that? And I'm going to add 10 drops of catnip oil.

Catnip oil is a little bit harder to find, guys, because it's not a true essential oil. A little bit harder to find. You have to maybe buy it from your local health food store or you can buy it online too. You can get organic catnip oil. Then you can add lemon oil or whatever. Eucalyptus has been proven to be as effective as DEET. Geranium absolutely is as effective as DEET. If you're in a high endemic area, you can add your extra spray. Then you can give the spray a good shake and store it in your fridge.

This is what I do. First of all, it smells fantastic. If you have dogs, a lot of times just that spray sound, dogs are out on that tch-tch-tch. If you have a dog that doesn't like to be misted, I find it quite it beautiful. If you have a dog that's out on being misted, guys, just spray your hands and pet your dog. You don't have to, especially around the face, you don't have to be spraying your dog. They can get freaked out.

But I have this in the fridge. When my dogs head out for the morning, I mist them in the morning. Then if we are going for a hike in the afternoon, I mist them again. This is a beautiful topical deterrent that will make your dog less hospitable to outdoor fleas and ticks when they're out and about.

Now, the active ingredients, specifically those oils, are gone and off the body in, I would say, about four hours. You may need to reapply several times throughout the day. But no big deal, [it's] all-natural, side effect-free. Don't spray it in their eyes, obviously.

Alright. Kitty recipe, very similar. Eight ounces of pure water, 4 ounces of apple cider vinegar (preferably organic), 10 drops neem oil and 10 drops of catnip oil. Notice there's no essential oils on the kitties, because kitties are typically out on essential oils, unless they're prepared in very specific ways. In this particular blend, neither one of these oils are actually truly essential in the sense that they're distillates, so we're safe. For the kitties, we do the exact same thing. We add 10 drops of neem oil, 10 drops of catnip oil.

Catnip oil is actually really great because it prevents against the mosquitoes too, which is very nice. Kitties are not so prone to heartworm, but dogs are. The catnip oil is actually a really nice mosquito deterrent as well. Two easy, simple all-natural recipes that you can use to make sure dogs and cats smell fantastic, and a really nice way to offer some daily protection as you go about trying to prevent fleas and ticks in the spring, summer and fall.

Those of you who have been through fleas and ticks know that fleas are okay with the heat. Ticks have a big boom in the spring, and then they have another grand hoorah in the fall. Ticks are tough little buggers. Ticks can attach even late into November and December here in Chicago. They come out early and they stay late, but there's a little bit of a lull in the heat of the summer. Fleas have a big party when it gets warm and hot.

These types of sprays you can use during both flea and tick season for the entire summer and feel comfortable because you're not in any way providing any type of chemical or pesticide. Again, it can be blended nicely. If you are forced into using pesticides, you can use this to help decrease your pesticide load to offset the amount of chemicals you have to use on dogs and cats, which is great.

Alright. Some of the other commonsense things, guys, if you do go hiking or you spend a lot of time outdoors like I do, I do a tick check on my dogs every night. As I mentioned, I'm not so freaked out about fleas. I don't want them, but I'm not so freaked out about fleas as I am ticks. You need to be tick checking every night during the season.

When you get home from work, if you've gone on and walked about, yes, check yourself behind your ears, of course. But then you need to check your dogs around their eyes, around their ear base. You need to check between the toes, around the tail base. Using a flea and tick comb is awesome because it naturally exfoliates the dog's skin. You're getting rid of loose hair. But it does a great job of trapping any uglies that you've acquired on your walk about.

Recently on Facebook, there's a really great suggestion of using a lint roller. If you freshly come in from an outdoor tick endemic area, you can use a basic lint roller on your dog. If the ticks are on the top of their hair before they get down in to attach to their skin, if you can lint roller your dog, you can be kind of impressed with the number of ticks that are crawling that you can pick up with a quick lint roller.

All that to say, the premise is check, check, check. Nothing takes the place of physically checking for ticks.

Blood Tests for the Diagnosis of Tick-Borne Diseases

Probably the biggest mistake I have seen on referrals, so dogs that are coming to me from other veterinarians, is clients come in and they say to me, "I've had the Lyme vaccine. My dog's off the hook." No. Just because you get the Lyme vaccine doesn't mean that ticks won't attach to your dog. Your dog is just as susceptible with or without the Lyme vaccine. You still have to be thinking about what you're going to do to prevent external parasites from attaching to your dogs.

I'm not a big fan of the Lyme vaccine because it's a highly adjuvanted vaccine, and there have been substantial reactions. I'm a much bigger fan of not vaccinating for Lyme, and instead making commonsense decisions, like doing flea and tick checks. Most importantly, instead of doing a traditional heartworm test every spring, I'm going to strongly encourage everyone in a tick-endemic area to do either a 4Dx test that's run through IDEXX, or an Accuplex check, which is done through ANTECH, the two big national labs.

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Those two blood tests, yes, they check heartworm, but they also check for exposure to tick or diseases. I cannot stress this enough. I believe that tick-borne diseases are epidemic in North America. I mean that with no exaggeration. Epidemic. I think the reason that a lot of vets aren't talking about it is, to be honest, they're not checking.

I am a girl who checks. The reason I started checking is very selfish. In 2011, I was on 40-acres deep in the woods and my dogs are vibrantly healthy, but they had a lot of ticks. I'm like, "You know what? I'm just going to make sure that they had no symptoms, totally healthy. I'm just going to run a 4Dx and see." All five of my dogs were positive. I thought if my dogs are positive, then probably other people's dogs are positive too. I started suggesting to all of my clients that we just simply replace a traditional heartworm test for a 4Dx. It's maybe an extra, I don't know, 10 bucks. Well worth the cash.

I have a video on this on the site, because I have a video about all of these topics on the site. I have hundreds of videos about fleas, ticks, how to treat tick-borne disease. All

this stuff is covered in depth on the website. But I fell down when I saw the number of positive dogs that had been undiagnosed.

The cool thing, because I'm a proactive vet, I was able to completely eliminate any potential for Lyme disease to get a foothold on those dogs because I identified it before they ever got sick, before the dog even knew that he was sick. Before he ever had a symptom, I had identified the dog had exposure. I had confirmed that it was an infection versus an exposure.

Don't ever let a veterinarian give you antibiotics because your dog has just had exposure. I confirmed that two of my dogs were actually positive. The other three, their immune systems did exactly what they were supposed to do and fight off that infection. Two dogs were genuinely positive, and I was able to treat them with an all-natural protocol. They circumvented and they're fine.

But I believe it's because of my proactive stance of identifying that early, probably – not save their life, but certainly save them from a lifetime of arthritic pain and chronic Lyme disease, which I believe is something that we're headed towards because most veterinarians aren't proactive. That's my spiel on testing.

How to Deal With Pet Allergies

Okay. We're moving on to allergies, because at the same time that grass blooms and dogs go outside and start walking through that beautiful freshly growing grass, they tend to come in with red, swollen, very itchy, irritated paws. That's the beginning of seasonal allergies.

Remember, guys, there are only two types of allergies. There are food allergies and there are environmental allergies. If your dog has itched all winter when you were under 3 feet of snow and there was no grass, probably not ragweed, grass, pollen and mold. [It's] probably food. Talk to your veterinarian about food. I have three dozen articles about how to identify and treat food allergies on the website.

If you have a dog that in the spring has gone outside and has come in after repeated exposure, with red, swollen and itchy paws, the most commonsense thing I can tell you to do is rinse your dog's paws off. Sounds dumb, sounds impractical and sounds maybe free. It's free. It's very common sense. In fact, the Association of Dermatologists has suggested that irrigation therapy, which is the fancy medical term for rinsing your dog's paws off, [be done].

Irrigation therapy can remove over 50 percent of the allergens stuck on your dog's paws, and therefore reduce 50 percent of the itch. It's side effect-free. It's free for you.

There's no cost involved, and it can provide substantial relief without drugs. Do it. It makes total common sense.

Likewise, if your dog is itchy from head to toe, if your dog has ragweed, grass and pollen allergies, which means his eyes are red and itchy, his ears are red and itchy, his armpits are red and itchy, he's running an itch from head to toe, do irrigation therapy on his whole body. Lather him up from his collar down. You can take a washcloth to his face every day. You can put some colloidal silver on the washcloth to reduce yeast growths around his eyes and around his ears. Lather him up once a week and rinse him off. By doing that, you are going to manually remove billions of allergens that are creating that seriously allergic, itchy skin. Common sense.

Veterinarians don't really ever recommend irrigation therapy because we can't sell it. We just say, "Get Benadryl," or usually, "Just give a lot of steroids all summer." Those medications are not without side effects. Just as humans have dust mite hypersensitivity, your dermatologist says, "Take a shower every day. Rinse them off." Proactive veterinarians are going to say, "If your dog is having a contact allergy reaction, then remove the contact allergens from the surface of his skin." Common sense. I can't stress that enough.

You can do that with a coffee can. You can do that with a paw plunger. In my house, I have a rubber-made sweater tub. Put a hose in it. You can put a splash of apple cider vinegar in the water. This is a great way to naturally disinfect those feet. It kills off yeast, removes those allergens. If you think that your dog is licking and chewing them off and he's got a skin infection, you can use a splash of betadine.

Betadine is povidone-iodine. It's an all-natural organic iodine solution. You can buy it at any health food store and most pharmacies. You add a glug of that into your water until it's about iced tea color. [It does] an awesome job of disinfecting. It kills staphs, strep, E.coli. It kills off everything. It's totally safe for the dog. It's a great way to disinfect his skin. If he's got hot spots, irritants, or if he's licked his paws to the point that he's created open sores, great way to provide soothing, gentle relief all summer long.

At my house, I parade the dogs through that foot bath before they come in, after they've gone pee. Last time at night, they come through. They all disinfect their feet, because then all night, I don't hear that [licking sound] where they just lay from about 8 o'clock until 12:30 and lick their paws. I'm out on that. If you disinfect their paws, there's nothing to lick. I'm all about doing that. It also provides that when they go to bed, 10 hours of irritation-free, soothing relief that you will benefit from all evening, and your pets will too.

Second thing I would tell you to do is if you know your dogs or cats have seasonal allergies, if you know that come May, you're dreading May 1st, guys, start a proactive protocol around April 1st. By you preemptively starting your dogs and cats on medicinal

herbs, quercetin – quercetin is a bioflavonoid, an all-natural plant extract that's a bioflavonoid. It's called nature's Benadryl. It does a super great job at helping to reduce histamine in the body. Start your dogs on it.

Bromelain, which is pineapple enzyme, is a natural anti-inflammatory. Quercetin and bromelain are great one-two punch for providing seasonal allergy relief that's drug-free. If you can start that before your dog has histamine wind-up, which means before they're red, before they're inflamed, before they're irritated, you provided this tremendous relief. When allergens bloom and they're in full season, your dog's immune response is slightly more balanced, which means there's a whole lot more relief and less symptoms coming than when you wait until he's inflamed and irritated. If you know your dog is a seasonal reactor, start a protocol beforehand.

I blended all of my top seasonal herbs into one product because I got sick and tired of recommending. Bromelain, quercetin and plant sterol – they can do a bunch of great things together. If you want to blend vitamin C, bee pollen, you can do stinging nettle.

One of my favorite herbs is cat's claw. Cat's claw is actually South America's most prescribed herb for allergies. I love cat's claw. You can put all of these things together and provide them to your pets before allergy season starts, which does a really nice job of providing comfort and a diminished response to the whole season.

If you remember physiologically what an allergy is on the immune spectrum, balance is in the middle. Everything on this side is the underactive immune system. Over here, we have cancer, where the immune system can't recognize abnormal cell growth. Here you have chronic infection. Allergic dogs and kitties are on this side of the immune spectrum. They are on the overactive immunologic side. Way over here, we have autoimmune disease where the body attacks itself. That's complete immune confusion. But, guys, right about here, we have allergies.

The immune system is overreacting inappropriately to things that it shouldn't. If you can preemptively start a proactive herbal protocol before allergy season gets started, you are going to dramatically reduce that allergy windup. You're both going to have a better season.

Now, of course there are homeopathies and traditional Chinese herbals that I love. But remember, those two particular therapies, which actually can be incredibly beneficial, those are tailored specifically to your pet's symptoms. Not all allergies are cookie cutter. You can have a whole variety of symptoms. Don't discount other modalities of healing. But you do have to work with someone who's trained at prescribing, or you yourself need to become confident in identifying those symptoms and then the right remedies to be able to unlock a functional healing response within your pets.

The other thing you could do is consider doing some local honey. We know that local honey – I would recommend within 60 miles of where you live. In essence, go to your local health food store or your local farmers market. Doing about half of a teaspoon of local honey per 15 pounds of body weight is a really nice idea for helping. It's almost like a little vaccine.

Those bees are carrying local allergens. There's physiologic amounts of allergens within the honey that have been basically homeopathically deluded to the point that by you giving a small amount of those allergens in the form of honey helps your pet build up an immunologic response to local allergens. That may be of benefit. That doesn't work instantly. You'll need to do it season after season, but it's something that you can certainly consider for providing long-term relief.

The goal, remember, for seasonal allergies is to be consistently working on your pet's immune system this summer, so that next summer, it's not as bad as this summer. Two years down the road, your pets may have a little itch in May and June, but then they're done. Whereas today, they may be itchy March through September. The goal is always to be looking ahead at what you can do to help the immune system reach more towards a homeostatic balance and not continue down the path of overreaction. But that takes [not only] thinking now, planning now, but also thinking later.

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Yes, pick a protocol today for your pet's allergic responses. If you are not working with an integrative veterinarian, that's some of the things that we talked about today – using the least toxic options to manage your pet's allergies.

A lot of veterinarians, in fact most veterinarians, were not trained in commonsense non-toxic options in vet school. Those of us that are integrative vets went through conventional vet school, and then we went on to get additional trainings, so we have more tools in our toolbox. If you are frustrated with the fact that all your veterinarian tells you to do is steroids, I would encourage you to visit the website AHVMA.org. Try and find an integrative vet by you.

It's not that we're opposed to using those drugs if needed to save your pet's life. It's that we start with the least toxic options first to try and work with your pet's body at fixing itself ultimately. Really, the goal of a healer is to unlock the healing potential within your animal's body. It's not the vets that are the magic. It's the veterinarian who knows enough on what to prescribe to be able to unlock healing response that's already within your pet.

Pet Diet's Effect on External Parasites and Allergies

We're going to take a few questions. Oh, I didn't talk about diet. Silly me. That's the premise of health and healing. Both for fleas and ticks, guys, and for allergies, it's really important that you think about the food that you're feeding.

There are anti-inflammatory diets and there are pro-inflammatory diets. If you are feeding any type of kibble, any type of kibble, there is starch in kibble. You're going to say, "Dr. Becker, you always bash kibble." It's not that I'm bashing kibble. If you have a dog that doesn't have allergies and doesn't have diabetes, no cancer, and is thriving, you may not see any issues from feeding kibble. However, my practice is full of sick animals. They have all sorts of medical conditions that are exacerbated by starch.

My issue isn't so much as dry food, guys. My issue is starch. Dogs and cats do not have a corn, wheat, rice, soy, potato. They don't have a requirement for complex carbohydrates. They have a fiber requirement, but they don't have a starch requirement. Starch breaks down into sugar. Sugar feeds yeast. Sugar feeds inflammatory processes within your pet's body. What I will tell you, the commonsense approach to allergies, guys, is to get your pets off of starch. I've got information on the website about how to calculate starch.

Sadly, carbohydrates are not listed on your pet's food bag. Frustrating. Come on, Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). We're waiting. But they are intentionally leaving carbohydrate load off of the bag because they don't want to freak you out because you will freak out when you calculate how much starch you're feeding.

If you can transition your pet to a low-starch diet below 10 percent, I promise you – that may not cure your pet's allergies – but I promise you, your pet will be better with a lower starch diet than a higher starch diet. Addressing food, feeding the best quality foods you can afford to feed, especially if your pets are struggling with an allergic issue, it's one of the most commonsense, easy, simple things I would encourage you to do. That's my pep talk on food.

Additional Questions and Recommendations

Okay. Stephanie asked, "Is the recipe only for fleas and ticks?" Certainly you could have other parasites. Sandflies if you guys are in Florida. I was just in Florida and had a sandfly issue. External parasites in general, Stephanie, do not like neem oil and do not like catnip oil. They do not like geranium oil. External parasites in general.

It's kind of interesting what the research shows when it comes to why some of these oils work. We're setting it primarily with ticks. When ticks are above in trees, they can sense carbon dioxide (CO₂). As mammals are walking down below, they can feel vibrations and they can sense the CO₂ levels. Ticks can sense carbon dioxide levels increasing. They have receptors so they know when to let go and drop on you and your pet,

because they can sense that you're approaching. Fleas also have chemoreceptors to be able to detect where their hosts are in the environment.

The cool thing about both apple cider vinegar, neem oil, catnip oil, eucalyptus oil, geranium oil, lemon oil or lemongrass oil – all of these oils have been proven to be very confusing to external parasites, which is kind of cool.

In essence, by you spraying your dog or even spraying yourself – I smell delicious – spraying everyone in the family – not the face – what it does is it confuses the external parasite. Your pack becomes less delicious. As you approach these parasites, they're not sure if you're going to be a good host or not so they will wait and they'll jump on someone else passing by because you are now confusing them or their chemoreceptors.

In essence, I'm not quite sure what parasites you're asking about, Stephanie. But across the board, any cooney-creepy outside, go for it, because it will be confusing to chemoreception.

Okay. Hala asks, "Should you dry the paws after foot soaks?" Great question, Hala. Yes. You can pat them dry, but you don't rinse. It's a really great question. Let's just say you guys were in an efficiency apartment, and there is no garage in your life, and you certainly don't have room for a rubber-made tub. Cool.

If you have a teacup poodle, fill your kitchen sink with this much water. Splash of vinegar if you've got yeast, splash of betadine if you've got staph. Pop your teacup right in there. Sing happy birthday to you. Sing to them. Tell them how beautiful they are for 30 to 60 seconds. Lift them out. I just lift them out on to an old towel and I just pat dry. You don't rinse the solution off. You just pat them dry.

By you leaving a little bit of vinegar residue, believe it or not, not only does it continue to fight staph and yeast hours after, when your dog goes to habitually lay down at night – and all you guys know what I'm talking about – you sit down to work on the computer or to take an hour out to watch TV, your dog lays down. What do dogs do? First, they rest. Then they watch you. If you're not going to engage with them, they're like, "Well, I'll just start licking my paws." Totally annoying, right? That sound, just licking.

Apple cider vinegar will be your best friend because first of all, it removes all of that staph, so there's nothing irritating to lick. But then it provides just enough disinfecting that your dog will smell it and be like, "You know what? There's nothing really to disinfect. I'm just going to leave my paws alone." Don't rinse those beneficial residual constituents off of your pet's paws. Just pat them dry. Great question.

Omer asks, "How about Dr. Mercola's Honey for our puppy too?" Yes, of course. Great idea. Totally fine. It's never too young to start this. Now, guys, common sense, you're not going to go hog wild crazy with honey. A half a teaspoon for 15 pounds, scaled down, so a quarter teaspoon for 7 pounds. If you give your dog two and a half cups of honey, will they become hyperglycemic? Yeah, and we don't want that. A little bit goes a long way. But great question, Omer. Of course you can utilize that.

Toni says, "What about food allergies in cats?" I'm just going to touch on it briefly, guys, because food allergies, we'll touch on that this fall. This particular topic was about seasonal allergies. But, Toni, to answer your question, because there are only two types of symptoms, there are food allergies and environmental allergies, if your kitty has irritation, if she's licking excessively, over-grooming.

But there are very diversified symptoms that are not traditional. Kitties that have food allergies can have inflammatory bowel disease-like (IBD) symptoms, vomiting particularly, diarrhea, constipation, chronic hairballs and coughing. GI symptoms are incredibly common for kitties that have food allergies, but also chronic eye discharge. Very diffused symptoms. If you have a kitty that has a consistent symptom, particularly skin and coat symptoms or GI symptoms, you need to be thinking about entertaining the idea that she could have a reaction to some component of her food.

Those of you who have read my articles on the site, I talk about this over and over and over, there are lots of different things your kitty could be reacting to. I've got great commonsense approaches. But in a nutshell, if you're impatient like I am and you just want to know if it's a protein source like chicken, seafood, chicken, seafood, a simple, easy and quick test you can do is a saliva test done by Dr. Jean Dodds. It's NutriScan.org. That's the website. It's a quick saliva test. You submit it yourself and it'll tell you the foods that you should avoid for your kitty and the foods that are safe.

Okay, guys. Thank you for joining me. Oh my gosh. Forty minutes together. I appreciate you taking 40 minutes out of your day to spend with me. I hope we've covered some great topics. I look forward to Facebook Live next month. Submit your topics here. If there's something next month that you want me to talk about, just include it in the comments and we'll do it. Okay, guys. Thanks for joining me. Bye.

[END]