



FOOD ALLERGIES

A pet can develop an allergy to a food ingredient at any time during her/his life. Most commonly the food allergy develops when the pet is young. Even if the pet has been eating the same food for years, a problem could develop. Food allergies typically cause skin problems in pets. When the pet eats certain food ingredients, its immune system over-reacts to the food and causes a reaction on the skin which will in turn cause the pet to become itchy or develop a skin infection. If a pet's skin is itchy, he/she may lick excessively, chew at the area, or scratch at the skin. Some pets that have repeated ear infections actually have food allergies. Pets that need their anal glands regularly expressed often have an allergy to a food ingredient.

The only way to know if your pet has a food allergy is to do a food trial. There is no simple, accurate blood test to determine which ingredients bother your pet. The pet must be placed on a strict hypoallergenic diet for a period of 8-12 weeks.

To determine the proper trial diet, all dietary ingredients that the pet has been exposed to need to be eliminated. It is helpful to check ingredient labels to determine these items. Consider also any treats or tablefoods that the pet has consumed.

Most owners prefer a commercial "hypoallergenic" diet, but some may prefer to cook a homemade diet. The important point is to not feed anything extra to the pet.

Special note: "Nothing else must pass the lips" **No** treats, **no** pet food, **no** seasonings, **no** rawhides and **no** chewable heartworm preventative. Any ingredient in pet food may cause a food allergy and during this trial period, it would be counterproductive to allow any additional edible item to be ingested.

Feline Hypoallergenic Diet tips: Consider trying rabbit, lamb, lamb baby food, Hill's D/D, Z/D, or Royal Canin diets such as duck/pea available through your veterinarian. Cats can be a challenge and several diets may need to be tried. Always mix the new food in slowly with the regular diet over several days.

After the 8 week trial is over, if the pet appears improved, a diet "challenge" must be done. You will feed your pet its regular diet and watch to see if its condition worsens. If the itchiness or skin and ear problems return, a food allergy is almost certain. At this point, a suitable commercial or prescription hypoallergenic diet will be sought to keep your pet comfortable and nutritionally healthy. The following are possible available prepared hypoallergenic diets:

Hill's Prescription D/D (dogs, cats)
Hill's Prescription Z/D (dogs, cats)
Iams Veterinary Response formula (fish, potato) (dogs)
Iams Veterinary Response formula (lamb/barley) (cats)
Royal Canin- (Venison/Potato) dogs
Royal Canin (H/P)-dogs
Royal Canin (duck/pea; Rabbit/pea; Venison/Pea)-cats

