

Allergic Skin Disease

Owner information sheet





Allergies are the most common skin problem your pet will face. Allergic skin disease is when the skin overreacts to either a food or environmental allergen. If it is left untreated, the skin can become compromised, but when managed well, your pet can live comfortably. Common examples of allergens include: pollen, house dust mites, grass, foods etc. Your pet may have one allergy or multiple. Both dogs and cats can develop allergies, but certain dog breeds are particularly predisposed including the West Highland White Terrier, Bull Terriers and Shar Peis.

Clinical signs of allergies include: itching, hair loss, skin and ear infections, etc.

Some pets do require ongoing medication to help manage their allergies such as; medicated shampoos, anti-inflammatory medications, allergy containing vaccines and specific allergen free foods. Allergies cannot be cured but can be managed.

Regular flea prevention is of paramount importance also as flea allergies can be mistaken for other allergies. Flea prevention (e.g. spot on treatments or tablets) is cost effective and will treat and control an underlying skin allergy caused by these (and several other) parasites.

Allergen avoidance methods can be undertaken at home, for example:

- Avoiding parks/green areas/fields where your dog's skin could potentially react to pollen (if this is not possible then washing down your pet after a walk can help to get rid of potential outdoor environmental allergens).
- Hoovering regularly in the home including soft furnishings to reduce dust mite exposure.
- Washing all fabrics, bedding, cushions etc. regularly with hypoallergenic products.
- Rinse/wipe your dog after walks/trips as this will reduce allergen load on the dog's skin.
- Avoiding processed treats/foods containing additives that may exacerbate a problem.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY RESCUE ANIMAL AND ME?

Your pet has been treated for a skin condition whilst in the rescue centre which has led to a diagnosis of a suspected allergy. The skin is stable now but will require monitoring to prevent flare ups. No specific diagnosis has been made, unless stated, other than suspected allergy/atopy based on the clinical signs, which has prompted some form of treatment. It is important to note that animals with allergies are more prone to developing new allergies or worsening reactions to existing allergens. We advise that you arrange regular check-ups with your own veterinary surgeon for skin assessment, and pay particular attention to your pet if they appear itchy as this is often the first sign of a flare up.

Please be aware that there is likely to be exclusions on any pet insurance policy that you take out due to the pre-existing nature of this condition. Any exclusions should be clarified with your chosen insurance provider prior to finalising a policy. We would advise working with your vet to discuss the use of written prescriptions to potentially reduce cost.