

Understanding Allergies in Dogs and Cats

What Are Pet Allergies? Allergies occur when a pet's immune system overreacts to substances (allergens) that are typically harmless. These reactions can affect the skin, respiratory system, or digestive system.

Common Causes of Allergies

1. Environmental Allergies (Atopic Dermatitis):
 - Outdoor Allergens: Pollen, grass, mold spores, weeds.
 - Indoor Allergens: Dust mites, mold, pet dander, fabrics, household cleaners.
2. Food Allergies:
 - Common culprits include beef, chicken, dairy, wheat, soy, and fish.
3. Flea Allergy Dermatitis:
 - Caused by an allergic reaction to flea saliva. Even a single flea bite can trigger intense itching.

Symptoms of Allergies

- Skin-related Symptoms: Itching, redness, rashes, chronic ear infections, hair loss, hot spots, excessive licking or chewing (especially paws, groin, face, and ears).
- Respiratory Symptoms: Sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, nasal discharge (more common in cats).
- Digestive Symptoms: Vomiting, diarrhea, chronic gas (primarily with food allergies).

Indoor vs. Outdoor Allergies

- Indoor Allergies: Tend to cause year-round symptoms. Pets may show signs like chronic itching, sneezing, or respiratory issues when exposed to dust, mold, or household chemicals.
- Outdoor Allergies: Often seasonal, worsening during spring, summer, or fall when pollen and other outdoor allergens are prevalent. Pets may experience increased itching after being outside.

When to See Your Veterinarian Persistent symptoms like itching, skin infections, chronic ear issues, or digestive upset warrant a veterinary visit. Early intervention helps prevent complications.


Management & Treatment Options

- Bloodwork to assess overall health and rule out underlying conditions.
- Medications: Antihistamines, corticosteroids, immune-modulating drugs, or allergy-specific immunotherapy.
- Regular bathing with hypoallergenic shampoos.
- Flea prevention year-round.
- Dietary trials for suspected food allergies.

Allergies can be frustrating for both pets and owners, but with proper management, your pet can live a comfortable and happy life. If you suspect your pet has allergies, we are here to help.

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