

Skin Allergies in dogs

Skin allergies can be due to ectoparasites (such as fleas), yeast, food allergies or environmental allergies. Sometimes they can be due to a combination of food and environmental allergies. Often we will see secondary bacterial infections on the skin or ear infections which need to be addressed. It is important to rule out other diseases which can also cause hair loss or itchy skin such as low thyroid hormone or fungal diseases such as Ring Worm.

A food trial with a prescription hypoallergenic diet is recommended for at least 8-12 weeks to rule out food allergies. During this period they cannot eat any other dog treats or human food. If it is necessary to give pills in food, marshmallows are recommended.

Environmental allergens such as pollen, dust, mold, human dander, etc...can be a cause of your dog's allergies as well. Sometimes there are multiple allergens your pet may be allergic to. To diagnose the specific allergens your pet is allergic to, a veterinary dermatologist may perform intradermal skin testing in conjunction with blood work. The dermatologist can then formulate an allergy shot for your dog based on the results. Some dogs need allergy shots more or less frequently than others. At Meridian Veterinary hospital we are able to perform the specific blood testing needed to aid in the diagnosis of specific allergens.

Medical management is also an option for reducing clinical signs associated with allergies. Prednisone is given in the short term since it is a fast acting drug. We do not recommend long term use of prednisone, or steroids in general, due to the side effects. Cyclosporine (brand name Atopica) acts in the same manner as prednisone to reduce the signs of allergies. Atopica is a safe drug to use long term without the side effects of steroids. Medication often needs to be given lifelong. Antihistamines such as Benadryl, may also work to help control allergies in small percentages of dogs.

Please call if you have any further questions or concerns in regards to your dog's allergies.