

# Food & Environmental Allergies

Dog food allergies are abnormal reactions to food or a specific ingredient within the food itself.

Environmental allergies are an abnormal reaction to something within the air such as pollen, trees, mold, smoke, etc. A reaction from a specific part of the body such as the skin, thyroid or pancreas is considered an auto-immune disorder.

Dog food allergies, environmental allergies and immune disorders can be a nightmare for dog owners, Veterinarians and the dogs themselves. The biggest problem is determining the source causing the reaction in the dog. Sometimes it's the dog food, other times it is an environmental reaction and many times it is both. Like people, some dogs are simply more sensitive than others.

In dogs, allergies routinely present themselves by causing severe itchiness and eruptions of the skin. Intense licking of the front feet, digestive distress (gas, gurgling and constant soft stool), inflammation of the toes and an irritated back end (licking and dragging rear end on the floor) are other classic symptoms.

Two of the most serious, yet very common auto-immune disorders are hyperthyroidism and inflammatory bowel disease. Many prominent veterinarians believe that combination vaccines, overusing cortisone drugs and commercial dog food weaken the immune system and are the major causes of both of these disorders.

## Establish The Problem

Many professionals believe that only 5 percent of allergies in dogs are related to diet. What makes determining the allergy source so difficult is that the allergic reaction is almost always the same. Itchy skin, chewing the feet, dragging the hind quarters, ear and anal sac problems are all common allergy symptoms no matter what the dog is allergic to.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to tell whether the allergies are food related or environmental just by looking at the dog. It's important to first eliminate other possible causes for the dog's discomfort before diagnosing food allergies as the problem:

- Flea Allergy Dermatitis (Flea Bite Sensitivity)
  - Atopic Dermatitis (Skin Allergies)
  - Bacterial or Yeast Infections
- Intestinal Parasites (Worms, Giardiasis, Coccidiosis)
  - Sarcoptic Mange



## Diagnosing Dog Food Allergies



Most Veterinarians will recommend performing a food trial for a twelve week period. A food trial will consist of feeding a food that the dog has never had before. This food must be the only thing your dog eats during that period of time. If the symptoms disappear or start to fade, then the dog will be placed back on his original food.

If the dog begins to have a negative reaction again, then a food allergy is diagnosed. If the dog shows no signs of reduced symptoms during the trial, then another food will be introduced for twelve more weeks. An ELISA blood test or Intradermal skin testing can also be performed to diagnose food allergies.

### **Treating Dog Food Allergies**

Once determined that food is the problem, the owner can decide on feeding his dog a homemade or commercially prepared raw diet or a specially prepared commercial diet for such sensitivities. Grain free diets are also a good place to begin. Many allergies such as yeast, Candida, skin & ear infections are mostly caused by foods with grain.

