



FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies or intolerances are caused by the body reacting abnormally to the presence of one or more proteins in food. As most of our pets 'Histamine releasing' cells are present in the skin, the most common sign of food allergies is persistently itchy skin. Areas like arm pits, groin, feet, face and abdomen and ears are commonly affected.

Food Allergies commonly, but not exclusively start when they are young and are not particularly seasonal. Onset of signs does not often correlate with a change in diet – they may have been on the same food for years. Some common triggers are Beef, Wheat, Dairy products in dogs and Fish, Beef and Dairy in cats.

There is not a specific test that can tell us exactly what your pet is allergic to so, to give us a "yes or no" answer, we do is an "Elimination Diet" trial.

The aim of an elimination diet is to remove any proteins or other allergic stimulants from the diet *completely* for 8 weeks. The response to this will give us a yes or no answer as to whether it is a food protein causing the allergy or it is something else.

Up to 75% of pets with food allergies have concurrent other allergies, i.e. Flea allergies, Grass/Pollen allergies, so we will be looking for a significant improvement not necessarily a complete cure.

THE ELIMINATION DIET:

As normal commercial foods have several inconsistent protein and carbohydrate sources and many different additives, these are not suitable.

There are two ways we can complete an Elimination Diet:

The first and easiest is to change your pets' diet to a specially formulated diet available from your Vet. This diet is formulated with very little or no products in it that could possibly cause allergic food reactions. This diet is fed strictly for 8 weeks as it can take 6 to 8 weeks to get an alleviation of the signs. The advantage of this type of diet is that it is easy, no cooking is involved and it is completely balanced.

The alternative, if you prefer cooking your pets' food, is to make a home cooked ration consisting of **ONE** protein and **ONE** carbohydrate source. We have to assume the ones we choose are not going to be a trigger so we must choose an obscure and unlikely source and one that your pet has not eaten before.

Protein sources can be **ONE** of: Horse meat, turkey (Not chicken), Venison, Roo meat, camel, goat, ostrich, donkey or buffalo.

Carbohydrate sources can be **ONE** of: Potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, kidney beans, lentils, barley, **NOT** pasta or rice.

These can be cooked but with no oil.

Ideally no treats should be given, but if you *have to* then dried 100% kangaroo or venison and all fruits could be given.

NOTHING ELSE BUT THE DESCRIBED DIET IS TO BE GIVEN BY MOUTH EXCEPT WATER!

They are to get **NO** flavored chews or other treats.

Synthetic chew toys are ok such as Rubber Kongs, balls, Nylabones.

At the conclusion of the 8 weeks they should be brought in to assess the degree of improvement. After this visit, whether you have had much of an improvement or not, we put your pet back on their old diet to see if they worsen again. If you have had a questionable response, then putting them back on their old diet will tell if you have had a partial response as they will generally get worse when back on their old diet. They will usually relapse or worsen within 3 days but it can take 7-14 days.

THINGS TO NOTE:

- It can take 8 wks to get a response.
- Your pet should not be on any other medication unless prescribed by your Vet.
- It is ok to continue with medicated shampoos suggested by your Vet.
- Pets are generally allergic to several things and they are not necessarily just a food. So if you do get some response but not a complete remission, there is likely some other trigger involved as well as food which may need exploring.
- It is important that all house members and guests have read this Handout. Anything other than the diet recommended by mouth will render the trial useless and you will need to start again.
- You must continue with the recommenced external parasite control.