

NATURAL PET[®] Care



What are the common types of allergies and how to manage them naturally with herbal remedies?

Most dogs or cats develop allergies between one to four years of age. Allergies are quite common in many breeds and mixed breeds and some allergies are genetically linked and are passed down from parents to offspring.

Allergy is a reaction to an allergen, a substance capable of inducing a hypersensitive reaction in humans and animals. An allergen can be almost any natural or synthetic substance in the environment such as grass, pollen, flea, dust or even fabric. Allergens enter your pet's body via inhalation, ingestion, injection, parasites or touch. When humans have allergies, they tend to sneeze, have watery eyes and a runny nose. Dogs and cats are more likely to excessively scratch or lick themselves instead.

The common types of allergies

Atopic or Allergic Inhalant Dermatitis – is the most common skin problems affecting both dogs and cats that occurred when the pets are sensitive to airborne particles including trees, grass, pollens, dust mites and mould spores. These allergens can be inhaled, ingested or sometimes absorbed through the skin. The itching may

be most severe on feet, flanks, groin and armpits. Although pets do exhibit watery eyes and some sneezing, animals mostly show reactions in their skin. They typically chew at their paws, scratch at their skin, and in some cases, develop secondary skin and chronic ear infections. Dogs may rub their face on the carpet. Ear flaps may become red and hot. Hot spots may develop due to irritation from constant chewing or scratching, which is then followed by infection. Cats usually have small crusty lesions over part of all of the body, usually around the neck or over the back.

About 10 to 15% of dogs are allergic to inhaled substances. Certain breeds appear to be predisposed to this type of allergy including Beagles, Dalmations, English Bulldogs, Golden Retrievers, Irish Setters, Labrador Retrievers, Lhasa Apsos, Miniature Schnauzers, Pugs, Shar Peis, Shih Tzus and terriers.

Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD) – is another common allergy in pets. Pets with FAD are not because of the flea itself but rather to proteins in the parasite's saliva. When the pet receives his first flea bite, his immune system responds and is overreacted. Then, when the pet is bitten

again, a more severe itching occurs, causing intense scratching, this not only starts a seemingly never-ending itch cycle, it also causes hive-like lesions from all of the bites, making the pet very uncomfortable.



Contact Dermatitis – is an allergic reaction to a substance that touches the skin. Common products that can cause contact allergies are plastics, fabrics and topical antibiotics. Typically, animals that suffer from these have reddened itchy skin covered in small, pus-filled welts. Caustic substances such as certain chemicals and poison ivy may cause a condition called irritant contact dermatitis, which should not be confused with an allergy.

Food Sensitivities – is a general and more fitting term for what pet owners think as 'food allergies'. This type of allergy accounts for only about 10% of allergy problem in dogs. The umbrella group of 'food sensitivities' actually includes food intolerance (which shows up as flatulence, vomiting and diarrhoea) and food allergies, a reaction of your pet's immune system that manifests themselves with itchy skin. Other symptoms include anal itching, shaking of the head, ear infections, licking paws, rubbing faces and behavioural changes. It is not surprised that this can develop suddenly even if your pet has eaten the same food for a long time. Most often, proteins are the culprits. Milk, eggs, corn, soy, wheat, beef, chicken, pork and preservatives are some examples. Many animals are now developing allergies to lamb as well even though it was used to be very hypo-allergenic. Avoidance of the triggering foods the allergy is the only specific and practical treatment of food allergies.

Herbal remedies for allergies

There are holistic alternative way for the relief of discomforts associated with atopic allergic dermatitis and other allergies. It helps to relieve skin irritations, inflammation and itchiness manifested by allergic reactions. It is also suitable to use as a prevention measure in pets with sensitive skin and to minimize the occurrence of allergic reactions.

Chamomile flower or also known as *Matricaria flower* (*Matricaria recutita* L.) used in herbal medicine consists of the fresh or dried flower heads. The flowers contain at least 0.4%(v/w) of essential oil. The main constituents of the essential oil are α -bisabolol or bisabolol oxide A and B. The flowers also contain flavonoid derivatives such as apigenin and apigenin-7-glucoside and chamazulene derived from matricin, a non-volatile proazulene.

Chamomile is a well-known, well-tolerated, thoroughly investigated herb with a relatively wide therapeutic range in human and animals. Chamomile is very successful as an oral or topical therapy when used alone or in combination with other herbs.

Benefits:

- inhibits production of inflammatory mediators
- dilates smooth muscle to relieve cramping and abdominal pain
- is a mild sedative and anxiolytic (anti-anxiety)
- soothes inflamed intestinal walls
- inhibits skin inflammation
- promotes healing of skin abrasions

Chamomile is a very safe herbal ingredient for both internal and external use. Pets with allergic reactions toward plants in the Asteraceae (or Compositae) family may experience some irritation to Chamomile, but the risk of this being a problem in dogs and cats is very low.

To ensure an effective and successful allergy management plan, it is important to work with your veterinarian to develop a plan that works best for your dog or cat. Many veterinarians are now recognizing the need for holistic therapy or herbal treatments instead of the use of corticosteroids which may also affect other organs in the body and should be considered only as the last resort to relieve a dog or cat in extreme discomfort.