

VETERINARY ALLERGY & DERMATOLOGY INC.

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Food Allergy

After examining your pet, we have determined a food allergy may be present. Food allergy can occur at any age and is usually present no matter what the season (nonseasonal). It has been shown that beef, corn, and soy are the most common allergens in dogs and occasionally pets will be allergic to more than one food component. **THERE IS NO VALID TEST FOR FOOD ALLERGY!** Blood testing or skin testing for food allergy in the dog and cat has not been shown to be valid. Unfortunately there are allergy companies that offer these blood tests but we would discourage you from having these done as current literature shows they are of no value. The only way to “test” for a food allergy is to start your pet on a prescription hypoallergenic diet. “Hypoallergenic” means he/she is fed a protein and carbohydrate source they have never been exposed to before. The belief is that if you have never been exposed to something, you cannot be allergic to it. For example, most pet foods and pet treats consist of corn, wheat, egg, beef, chicken, soy, and dairy products. All of these components need to be avoided when choosing a hypoallergenic diet to feed your pet. Remember pet treats include those ingredients as well, so treats cannot be used during the food trial. That applies to rawhides, pig ears, cow hooves, etc.

A “lamb and rice” diet is felt by many pet owners to be a “good diet for a pet’s skin”. If the pet is food allergic and has not eaten lamb before **AND** if only lamb and rice (no corn, wheat, egg, beef, soy, or chicken) is in the pet food, then lamb and rice is acceptable. The problem is most lamb and rice foods contain many of the above “other” ingredients and that makes them not useful as hypoallergenic diets. Commercially prepared hypoallergenic prescription diets available through your veterinarian include Royal Canin, Hill’s, or Blue Buffalo HF.. These are available in both canned and dry forms. “Limited ingredient” over-the-counter diets **ARE NOT** hypoallergenic as studies show they contain other ingredients not listed on the label! Many owners with small pets may want to cook for their pet and we will provide you with recipes. If you have any doubt as to whether to feed your pet a certain ingredient, do not give it to him/her and call us at the office and ask!

When a new diet is started, you should wean the pet onto it over 1 week by mixing the new food in with the existing food gradually adding more of the hypoallergenic diet every day. The hypoallergenic diet alone is fed for 8-10 weeks in dogs and 4-6 weeks in cats. If after 48 hours, a cat will not eat, please call the office. Cats can become ill if they go more than 48-72hours without eating!

No treats are allowed but fruits and vegetables may be used as treats especially in dogs. No corn or popcorn, however. Baked or microwaved potatoes are ok also, skin and all. The monthly heartworm preventative is fine as long as it is not the Heartgard chewable beef-flavored square or Interceptor which is pork-flavored. Unflavored Heartgard tablets or topical Revolution will have to be substituted. Please follow the **EXACT** food we suggest for your pet. If a pet supply store suggests an alternative, please call our office. With food allergy, there are very few hypoallergenic diets, and if we do this correctly the first time, we only have to do it once!