



Allergic Dermatitis (AD)

This is to summarise and help you understand the multifactorial disease and/or condition under the broad heading of Allergic Dermatitis.

First thing first this condition is very often not curable but managed. This requires a close Relationship between you and us to optimize the clinical outcome and quality of life for your pet.

AD can present as ear infections, hair loss, itchy skin, red inflamed skin with and/or without pimples. The areas it often presents itself are: on the feet, groin, armpits, chin, lumbal area or even the entire body.

Your pet's immune system is reacting to a protein in the environment. .

Anything from:

- Tick and flea saliva (among other parasites incl. worms)
- Protein in the food
- Dust mites
- Grass seeds
- Pollen (neighbourhood)
- Stay soft/ washing powder in bedding
- Contact (blankets, soil, concrete, perfume, tobacco smoke, incense etc.
The list goes on)

What happens

The body's immune system mounts an immune response trying to destroy this protein, because it sees it as something foreign. This manifests in your pet's body as the above symptoms.

This can be very distressing for pet, owner and vet all round.
It is important to note that this condition is often difficult to cure.
The best chance of action is to manage the cause.
This is done through a process of elimination.

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It is possible to do allergy testing. In this case blood is sent overseas and a series of vaccinations will be made up to prime the immune system and help the clinical signs. The cost for this is between R 4000-10.000 and is by no means a cure but rather an elimination of your pet's symptoms.

It is near impossible to control the environment so we start by

1.) Controlling the diet.

There are many 'novel' protein diets on the market to which their immune system is less likely to react.

E.g. Duck and rice; egg and rice, venison and pea, fish and potato, horse and potato.

There is even a hydrolyzed plant protein diet where the protein chain is broken up into pieces so your pet will get nutritional value from protein but his immune system won't recognize it as something to react to.

We do offer prescription food for AD patients from leading vet food companies.

2.) Eliminate all parasites

Even though you may not see these little critters it takes only one to jump the wall from next door to bite your pet for him to respond as above. The best way to protect your pet is to get so-called "spot-on" products offered at our reception.

Most of these products have a residual activity and will protect your pet for 4 weeks. Fleas for example are particularly insistent and it is important to also manage the environment in conjunction too all other animals your pet comes into contact with.

3.) Cortisone

Cortisone is wonderful, as it takes away all the effects of the allergy i.e. the redness, pain and irritation to the skin.

Yet this may come with side effects.

At high doses or even long term treatment/regular use it can suppress the immune system, make your dog drink more and therefore urinate more and may cause them to gain weight. If *chronic* it can corrode cartilage in joints and induce certain endocrine disorders such as diabetes and cushing syndrome.

Having said that, cortisone has its set place in the management of AD pets and the dose is adjusted to avoid these side effects as much as possible.

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In conclusion the holistic approach is the way to go and requests your feedback and information. This is the best way to manage your pet's condition and sadly a quick fix is not the solution. At the beginning it might be a trial and error situation as something that works on another pet might not work with yours. Therefore the more we see your pet and have the opportunity to evaluate, the quicker the effect of the treatment is reached and less flare ups occur.

In addition: Ears

Ears are merely an extension of the skin. It is important to note that 99% of bilaterally occurring ear infections are as a result of a food allergy.

"But I've had my dog on this food his whole life" we hear you say.

There are two side to this: an adult onset and giving treats

In older dogs the immune system often takes time to prime.....

Also it is not only the chicken or beef in his regular pellets but often the protein they react to in those biscuits/ treats they get.

It is very important that when following the specialized diet that no treats are given i.e. elimination of any other food source.

You would need to stick to this strict protocol for 8-18 weeks to know whether your pet reacts to the protein in the old food and/or treat or not.

As with skin tests will be done in order to determine secondary complicating factors e.g. Yeast or bacterial infection. These often require topical treatment but in some cases systematic too.

It is of utmost importance that you know how to effectively clean your pet's ears to maintain an optimal environment to prevent such secondary complications.

Above all if you are worried or uncertain please do not hesitate to call or come in. We will be more than happy to help.

Regards FVC team

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