



## Atopy (Seasonal Allergies)

It is this time of year we seem to be seeing a lot of itchy pets in the clinic. Dealing with an itchy pet can be annoying for both you and your pet. The constant itching and biting their skin can not only drive you crazy but it can just as easily lead to further damage to your pets skin resulting in ever worsening results! Atopy or seasonal allergies in pets is very similar to hayfever except instead of the sneezing, runny eyes and noses, your pet will get itchy skin. The itch is a result of allergens being absorbed across the skin and presented to the immune system. As a result inflammatory cells migrate to the point of entry (the skin) causing inflammation and from here the itching begins.

There are specific breeds of dog that are predisposed to allergies including Dalmatian, Golden Retriever, West Highland White Terrier, Shar Pei, Labrador, Cairn Terrier, Lhasa Apso, Shih Tzu, Boxer and Pug.

There are a large number of conditions that result in an itchy pet so it can be difficult to tell if your pet is itchy as a result of atopy or as a result of something else. Generally if your pet is itching as a result of atopy their history will contain most of the following factors;

- ◆ the itching will begin from a young age (1-3 years)
- ◆ Mainly an indoor pet
- ◆ There has been a good response to steroid therapy in the past
- ◆ There is a history of yeast infections in the skin
- ◆ The front feet are involved
- ◆ The ear "flaps" are involved but the margins are not
- ◆ The lower back area is not involved.

The typical "itch map" is shown in the figure beside

There are a number of different treatment options for atopic pets depending on the severity of the itch and how much money you are willing to spend. Supportive care should be used in all itchy pets but may be all that is needed in mild itches. If supportive care cannot control the problem then there is a range of medication options available as well as immunotherapy.

### Supportive care

As stated this may be all that is needed in a mild case. Supportive care consists of essential fatty acid supplementation, bath, restoring the skin barrier, control of secondary infections, topical treatments and antihistamines. Bathing is critical for itchy pets as it physically removes the allergens from the pets coat, reduces bacteria and yeast populations, helps repair the skin barrier and the cool/warm water will help to cool the skin irritation. It is recommended that an allergic dog be bathed once or twice weekly with a prescription shampoo followed by a conditioner/moisturizer. Keep in mind that your pet will need to be given a flea control that cannot be washed away. Antihistamines are often of more value in cats than in dogs and are more helpful when given prior to a flare up. Essential fatty acids help with the skin barrier.

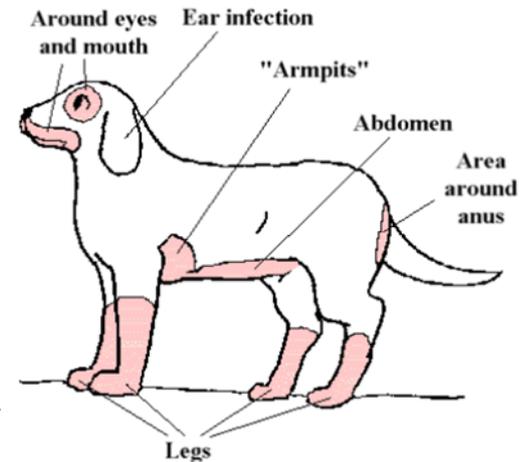
### Medications

There is a wide range of medications available after a veterinary consult. In most cases the medication does not need to be a lifelong course but there are some cases that need to be on low dose medication for life.

### Immunotherapy

In very severe cases your pet may need referral to a dermatologist/skin specialist for blood or skin testing. This can determine specifically what your pet is allergic to and from this an "allergy shot" can be formulated. This may be only a short course of injections or a monthly injection for life.

It is important to realize that itchy pets are just as frustrating for us as vets to treat. A lot of the time we do not find out exactly what causes your pet discomfort but we can improve their quality of life using the above mentioned methods. It is also important to realize that atopy is not something we can cure but something that given the correct treatment we can manage.



### Case of the month: Nutty

Nutty, the heading dog, visited us recently after having an enlarged testicle for about two weeks. The right testicle had swollen to about the size of an ostrich egg, obviously not normal! Initial thoughts were that it was cancer so he was taken to surgery the next day to have both the swollen and normal testicle removed. Surgery went well and Nutty recovered nicely, probably feeling a bit lighter, albeit he was missing his crown jewels. The testicle was sent to the laboratory for testing to see what was going on in the tissue. There are three types of testicular cancer an uncastrated male dog can get; seminoma, leydig cell tumour and sertoli cell tumour, each ranging in their malignancy.

Results came back, and surprisingly – but luckily – the enlarged testicle was not cancerous! Instead it was shown that the testicle had orchitis and epididymitis, an infection of the testicular tissue. This is rare, especially in New Zealand, as we do not have a lot of the exotic diseases which cause this problem as seen overseas. The causes for this disease include infections that can ascend from the urethra, descend from the urinary bladder or prostate, through the blood stream, or from a penetrating wound.

Great news for Nutty, as he can go on to live and work for years to come. This condition and other testicular problems can be reduced through neutering your pets, the younger the better. At Vetco, we recommend de-sexing your pet from 6 months onwards.

Benefits of de-sexing:

- ◆ Roaming behaviours are reduced so dogs are less likely to be involved in road traffic accidents
- ◆ Aggression is decreased making dogs easier to train
- ◆ Anti-social behaviour, such as mounting objects and marking territories, is diminished
- ◆ Searching for in season bitches and fighting with other dogs is reduced
- ◆ Risk of testicular cancers is severely minimised
- ◆ Risk of prostate problems which can affect urination and defecation is mitigated

### Ear trouble

It's the time of year when your pups ears get sore  
 You may see them head shaking  
 Or giving their face a good paw  
 The ears turn red and start to swell  
 When you leave them too long  
 They may develop a putrid smell  
 It's important when you see these signs you bring them in quick  
 If you don't the infection can spread  
 And your pup may get really sick



Alas infection isn't always what's making pup whine  
 There may be a grass seed stuck  
 Other than head shaking the ear can appear fine  
 Getting the foreign body out can be a real pain  
 Sedation is often required  
 Without it our attempts are in vain  
 But it is important the ear is 100% clear  
 At the end of the day  
 We want pup to be able to hear

An additional cat and dog problem is ear mites  
 They are so small  
 They keep well out of sight  
 This is a problem where you can fight back  
 Just get an appropriate flea treatment  
 We sell them by the pack  
 However just by you looking in the ear it can be hard to tell



Whether there is a more serious condition  
 As deep in the ear is where mites dwell

### Putting your pet in a kennel over the Holidays

With Christmas fast approaching it is time to start thinking about who is going to look after your pet while you are away relaxing in the sun. If your four legged friend is planning on taking a trip to a boarding kennel it is important to ensure that they are up to date with all of their vaccinations early to save stressing last minute.



Most kennels require dogs to be fully vaccinated against both parvo and kennel cough and cats to be fully vaccinated against cat flu. It takes approximately 2 weeks from the time of vaccination for your pets immune system to accept the vaccine. Therefore it is best that booster vaccines are done at least 2 weeks before they are put in the kennels. If your pet is not fully vaccinated then speak to the kennels as in some cases they can be kept in isolation (although this makes their stay much less enjoyable).

Some kennels may also require flea and worm treatment to be up to date also. Even if they don't it is still a good idea to get this sorted before going into a kennel to prevent infection while there.

If you have any questions about what is required to board your pet in a kennel then give the kennel a ring and discuss this with the manager there, this way you can be sure to avoid any last minute panic when checking them in.

