

Allergy Tests for Pets

Imagine that you have burning eyes, itchy skin or hair loss, but without the ability to talk. Just like people, many pets suffer from allergies. If you have owned a pet with allergies, you know the common signs: skin redness, scratching, licking, chewing at the skin, ear and skin infections, hair loss, excessive paw licking among others. Pet allergies are a medical condition that requires lifelong management to control the symptoms. Allergy testing and Immunotherapy are veterinary tools to help identify and control pet allergies.

Types of Allergies

Atopic Dermatitis, also known as Atopy, is the term for inhaled seasonal pet allergies from sources such as pollens and molds in the environment. About 80% of pet allergies are Atopic Dermatitis. Most of the remaining pet allergies are food or flea allergies. Some pets can suffer from food allergies along with Atopic Dermatitis at the same time.

Allergy Testing

There are two main forms of allergy testing, blood testing and intradermal skin testing. Blood testing can be performed by your veterinary clinic, and test your pet's immune response to allergens. At The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic we use the Heska Allercept Test, which requires a very small blood sample.

Intradermal testing can only be performed by a veterinary dermatologist (skin specialist doctor). During this testing method, the veterinary dermatologist will inject allergens under the skin and measure the pet's response to the allergen.

Testing for food allergies is not reliable. When food allergies are suspected, a food trial (prescription diet) is prescribed by the veterinarians at The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic to test and manage food allergies.

When to Test

There are a few main reasons when your pet should be allergy tested:

1. When a pet needs prednisone (a broad antiinflammatory treatment drug) to control the allergies through multiple seasons or continuously have allergy signs or flare ups when not on prednisone
2. When owners want a treatment that is more targeted to their pet's specific allergen

My Pet was Tested: Now What?

Once your pet is tested and the allergen is determined, information will be discussed on how to minimize exposure to allergens. For example, you may be able to minimize the effect on a ragweed-allergic pet by keeping that pet indoors when ragweed counts are high.

After an allergy test is performed, the veterinarians at The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic evaluate what long term treatment will be needed to manage the pet's specific allergies. One method used for control is Immunotherapy, which is the process of giving your pet specific allergens so the body learns to ignore the allergens. At The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic, we prescribe Heska Allercept Drops and Shots for Immunotherapy. Your veterinarian will discuss what long term management plan is best with your pet and their specific allergens.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.