

Fall is Allergy Season

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. Pets that are affected only during certain times of the year, such as the Fall, need to start treatment prior to when allergy signs begin.

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. Pets that itch and scratch only during one season during the year have Atopic Dermatitis. Ragweed is the most common trigger for allergies in the Fall. This yellow flowering weed starts releasing pollen in August and often continues until freezing weather arrives. Molds are another common problem in the Fall, and are often found in damp leaves.

Start Treating Now

Pets that suffer from Fall allergies need to start treatment to manage the symptoms in early August. It is best to work with your veterinarian to create a plan that is best for your pet. Common treatments include the following.

1. **Antihistamines:** Benadryl is a common medication used to control allergies. Often people do not give a high enough dose to help the pet, it also has to be given at least 2-3 times per day during the entire allergy season. Some pets will get drowsy on the medication. Other antihistamines include certirizine, hydroxyzine and others.
2. **Shampoos:** Bathing a pet can help to remove allergens that are on the surface of the skin. Often, pets with allergies have a poor skin barrier, which allows more allergens to get into the body. Bathing is usually needed at least every 2-3 days. Some shampoos may contain anti-itch medications, and also antibiotic or antifungal medications to control secondary infection.
3. **Topical Sprays:** For pets that are itching in one general location on their body, a topical spray that includes a hydrocortisone and antibiotic can help.
4. **Omega Fatty Acid Supplements:** These supplements are a natural anti-inflammatory agent, and can help reduce itching and help with general skin health.
5. **Pets that are not managed on the top 4 treatments may need oral prednisone.** The goal with this medication is to start at a low dose before symptoms occur and maintain them on a low dose throughout the season to prevent allergy signs.
6. **Apoquel:** This is a new allergy drug. This medication is in limited supply. Unless your pet is already on the medication, it is unlikely that it will be available for general use until at least 2015. Once this medication is readily available, it will become the core treatment for allergies in pets.
7. **Other allergy treatments include immunotherapy and atopica.** These treatments need to be given all year round to be effective.

Infections also cause Itch

Allergies can be a very frustrating condition for pet owners. Your veterinarian is here to help find the best treatment for your pet. Often, pets with allergies develop secondary bacterial and fungal skin infections that need to be treated with oral medication. Ear infections are also common secondary condition that would need prescription medication. For tough cases, your normal veterinarian may refer you to a veterinary dermatologist.

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