

Atopy/Allergic Dermatitis

Atopy or Allergic Dermatitis is an allergic skin disease in dogs. Canine atopy is sometimes likened to the equivalent of hay fever. Some form of hypersensitivity develops to certain substances these can be either inhaled, absorbed or in the environment. The most common allergens are tree pollens and grass and weed pollens moulds, mildew and the house dust mite.

Atopy can be seen most commonly developing in the 1-3 year age groups, and generally associated with the pollen season, although in the older pet this can be more constantly present. Atopic dogs are also prone to seborrhoea and secondary bacterial skin infections.

Symptoms

- Dogs with atopy are extremely itchy, of which the itchiness can develop before any real signs of rash appear it may just be a reddening of the skin.
- The dog will chew lick and scratch at the skin and feet often resulting in hair loss and/or secondary skin infections.
- Irritable due to excessive itchiness.
- Odor to the pet.

Diagnosis

Due to the many skin conditions that can be caused by allergies, your vet will ask a number of questions:

- Diet of the pet
- Environment, plants in property, bedding etc
- Any skin care you may be using on the pet, shampoos flea treatments
- Where and how quickly did the itching progress
- Noticeably more prevalent during certain seasons

Tests that may be performed:

- Multiple skin scrapings and smears
- Faecal Examination
- Skin Biopsies
- Skin Testing for allergens
- Food Elimination
- Environmental Elimination

Treatment

This will depend on the severity of the problem but is usually a multi treatment, these can include:

- Topical creams to reduce any redness and irritation.
- Antibiotics if any infection present.
- Oral Antihistamines to reduce any redness and irritation.
- Essential Fatty Acid Supplementation topical application to aid in the health of the skin.
- Shampoos and conditioners to also aid in the health of the skin.
- Hypersensitisation – Introduction of small amounts of an injection containing allergens to help create a desensitisation over time.

Your veterinarian will determine which treatment regime is best to manage your dog's condition. By working with your vet a wellness plan can be put together to maintain your pet in a healthy, comfortable state.