

Does Your Dog Have Allergies?

Many people don't realize that their dogs, just like human beings, can suffer from allergies. In fact, about twenty percent of the dogs in the United States alone suffer from one allergy or another, with flea allergy dermatitis being the most common form of allergies in dogs. Other types include atopic dermatitis, food allergies, and inhalant allergies.

Signs and symptoms of dog allergies may vary but are often marked by persistent itching and discoloration of the skin (most common in skin allergies), coughing, sneezing, wheezing, and mucus discharge (most common in inhalant allergies), and nausea, lethargy, vomiting, and diarrhea (common to food allergies and other ailments.)

Over-the-counter preparations and treatments for common dog allergies exist and may be purchased at any good pet supply store, but care should be taken when choosing such treatments. Consultation with a vet is the best first course of action for several reasons. First of all, what you think is an allergic reaction may actually be signs of a more serious ailment and a vet should be the one to determine whether that is the case. Secondly, if the allergy is severe enough, over-the-counter treatments may not be sufficient to treat the symptoms and a prescription strength treatment may be required. There is also the chance that the dog does not have an allergy at all. The last thing you want to do is medicate your pet unnecessarily.

If you do think your dog has some type of allergy, consult your vet. The doctor will be able to perform tests to determine whether an allergic condition exists, how severe it is, and what the proper treatment will be. If the dog has an allergy to certain foods, it will be imperative to restrict the animal's diet to eliminate those items that cause a reaction. The vet's testing methods can help to determine whether this type of allergy exists as well. If the dog has flea allergy dermatitis (an allergic reaction to the saliva of fleas, rather than to the insects themselves), an extreme flea prevention regimen will be recommended.

Just like humans, dogs that suffer from various allergies can live comfortably with them if they are detected and treated properly. It is important to keep in mind that this is not a time to "play doctor" by attempting to diagnose and treat a possible allergic condition yourself. Only your veterinarian is qualified to determine whether your dog is suffering from allergies and what course of action to take.