



Save the Dalmatians & Others Canine Rescue, Inc.

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CANINE ALLERGIES

If you suspect that your dog has allergies, and your pooch displays any of the following symptoms, you may be right!

- Itchy ears and/or chronic ear infections
- Constant licking
- Red/inflamed skin
- General itchiness, runny eyes, sneezing and/or hives
- Swelling of the face, ears, lips, eyelids, or earflaps
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting

However, diagnosing allergies in a canine is not as simple as we want them to be and frankly, can be a complicated process. Generally, there are 3 categories of allergies that can cause symptoms in a dog, and the symptoms of these 3 groups can overlap making a diagnosis more complex.

Food allergies is one category. Dogs with food allergies most commonly display itching of their ears and paws, can have chronic ear or foot infections, as well as poor skin and coats. Also, these symptoms can be accompanied by gastrointestinal problems (vomiting and/or diarrhea). In rare cases a severe reaction can result in anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction of rapid onset affecting many body systems - like what we might see in a human with a severe peanut allergy).

Obviously, the best way to treat an allergy is to avoid the food, or foods which contain the ingredients the dog is allergic to. Additionally, your vet may be able to prescribe medication that will help control the symptoms associated with the allergy.

Environmental allergies is the second category. Dogs can be allergic to grass, pollen, dust mites, and mold, as well as household products like carpet fibers and deodorizers, cleaners, insecticides, etc.

Skin allergies (also known as dermatitis which is a general term for the most common skin infections) is the third category. The 6 most common types of dermatitis are:

- Atopi
 - Develops from allergens in the environment such as grass, pollen, fleas and dust mites. Dogs scratch, rub, lick, chew and bite different areas of their skin causing redness and hair loss.
- Acral Lick (also called lick granuloma)
 - Occurs due to the continuous licking of a specific area which will eventually become infected.

- Contact Dermatitis
 - Occurs when the skin comes into contact with an irritant. Common causes are household chemicals (i.e. carpet cleaners, flea collars, and fertilizers). The exposed skin becomes red and itchy.
- Sarcoptic Mange
 - Caused by the Sarcoptes mite and is extremely irritating, affecting the ears, abdomen, legs and chest of the dog.
- Pyotraumatic aka “hot spots”
 - Caused by bacteria normally found on the skin and occur when the dog incessantly scratches and chews the area. The area will look painful, red, moist and hairless. This condition is more common in hot, humid weather.
- Flea Allergy
 - An allergic reaction to a flea bite (the saliva of the flea causes this condition). Dogs will constantly itch and may develop hot spots.

One of the non-invasive, affordable, and over-the-counter food and environmental allergy test kits that we’ve tried and liked is by **5Strands**. The kit utilizes your pooch’s hair to provide comprehensive results that may help you discover the root of the problem. The reasons we like this kit is because:

- Is easy and non-invasive with no pricks, no pokes, and no pain;
- It’s affordable (about \$140 on Chewy.com);
- Fast results usually in 5-7 days;
- Hair testing eliminates storage, transportation and usability constraints that are essential with other types of tissue samples; and
- Hair is stable and not affected by factors like medications, food, and stress.

We received a report which set forth Level 3 (“stop”), Level 2 (“slow down”) and Level 1 (“be aware”) lists of those items which appear to trigger allergies in our dog, according to the hair samples submitted (see sample excerpts below).

Food - LEVEL 3	
LEVEL 3	Alfalfa Nutrient Concentrate
LEVEL 3	Almond Oil
LEVEL 3	Bacon
LEVEL 3	Beef Heart
LEVEL 3	Canola Meal
LEVEL 3	Cashew nut
LEVEL 3	Chicken Fat
LEVEL 3	Cows Milk
LEVEL 3	Crab
LEVEL 3	Menhaden Fish Meal
LEVEL 3	Niacin
LEVEL 3	Oat
LEVEL 3	Oyster
LEVEL 3	Peanut Butter
LEVEL 3	Pork Liver
LEVEL 3	Quail
LEVEL 3	Rosemary
LEVEL 3	Sodium Selenate
LEVEL 3	Soy Grits
LEVEL 3	Soy Protein Concentrate
LEVEL 3	Soybean Oil

Food - LEVEL 2	
LEVEL 2	Anchovy
LEVEL 2	Beef Tallow
LEVEL 2	Canola Meal
LEVEL 2	Celery
LEVEL 2	Chicken Meal
LEVEL 2	Chicory Root Extract
LEVEL 2	Coconut Oil

Environmental - LEVEL 1	
LEVEL 1	Cats
LEVEL 1	Clover
LEVEL 1	Colonial bent grass (Agrostis tenuis)
LEVEL 1	Cotton
LEVEL 1	Goldenrod
LEVEL 1	Hydrogen Peroxide

Environmental - LEVEL 3	
LEVEL 3	Apple Tree Ash
LEVEL 3	Ash (Fraxinus excelsior)
LEVEL 3	Dandelion
LEVEL 3	Imidacloprid
LEVEL 3	Pansy
LEVEL 3	Pine
LEVEL 3	Polysorbates
LEVEL 3	Tulip
LEVEL 3	White Vinegar

While an over-the-counter test kit can shed some light on the subject as you begin your journey to find solutions, you should always seek the help of a veterinarian or allergy specialist for your dog.

Save the Dals always recommends that you consult with your veterinarian or allergy specialist to diagnose and deal with any canine allergies, as these medical professionals are the most qualified to manage your dog's symptoms (also, keep in mind that some or all of the above-referenced symptoms may be a sign of another condition).

Disclaimer: This article is not an endorsement for using 5Strands, nor any other brand of food and environmental intolerance/allergy test kit. Additionally, using any food and environmental intolerance/allergy testing kit should not be a substitute for professional veterinary or allergy specialist advice, diagnosis or treatment. Professional veterinary or allergy specialist advice should never be disregarded, nor should you delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this article.