



## Pet Allergies: Dust, Food, Fleas-or Something Else?

**What are environmental allergies?** Environmental allergies are caused by things like pollens, house dust, flea bites, dust mites, and mold. Allergies are diagnosed by performing a skin allergy test and/or a blood serum allergy test.

### **What are food allergies?**

- Food allergies are typically thought to cause inflammation of the ears and the under the tail, as well as soft stools; however, pets with food allergies may present with other symptoms as well.
- The only way to determine if your pet has a food allergy is to conduct a food trial for three months where nothing passes your pet's lips except for the prescribed diet, including flavored chewable medications, flavored chews, and rawhides. The pet also should not share a water bowl with other pets on different diets.
- Dogs and cats can be allergic to any ingredient in food, including preservatives. Usually the allergy is to proteins, so grain-free diets will not typically help.

### **What are common allergy symptoms?**

- Skin itchiness
- Skin redness
- Chewing and/or licking of paws and legs
- Loss of hair
- Inflamed ears and ear infections
- Oozing or crusty sores

### **How can I lessen my pet's allergy symptoms?**

- Use a monthly flea treatment
- Bathe dogs after being in contact with outdoor allergens
- Administer allergy shots
- Give other medications to lessen pets' response to allergens and calm immune system
- Consider a diet trial supervised by a dermatologist

**Remember that allergies cannot be cured, but in most cases, they can be managed to give your pet a comfortable, happy life.**

**If you suspect your pet may be struggling with food or environmental allergies, call the MSU Veterinary Medical Center to schedule an appointment with our Dermatology Service.**

[cvm.msu.edu/dermatology](http://cvm.msu.edu/dermatology)

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