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## **Food Allergies & Feeding Trial**

If your dog or cat suffers from itchy skin or recurrent ear infections, it is possible they have allergies to food or other things they may be eating. Pets of any age can begin to show signs of food allergies and it may occur spontaneously even if you haven't changed their diet. The most common food allergens are beef, chicken, lamb, milk products/cheese, corn, wheat, soy and egg. Other things that can trigger allergies are dyes, preservatives, rawhides, treats or bread.

Eliminating the trigger allergen(s) is the best way to control any allergy. This allows us to avoid using lifelong medications. With food allergies we aim to eliminate all potential allergens by feeding a very specific, restricted diet for 6-12 weeks. The diets can either be hydrolyzed (predigested) or new proteins that your pet has never before eaten. Many food manufacturers offer novel protein diets, allowing us to select a new protein source such as duck, salmon, venison or vegetarian-based. Alternatively, we can recommend a raw food diet or a recipe for a home-cooked diet. Hill's Science Diet z/d Ultra and Royal Canin Vegetarian may be recommended for allergy feeding trials.

### **Feeding Trial Instructions:**

1. Treat any skin diseases (ticks, mites, skin/ear infections, etc) at the beginning of the food trial.
2. Feed only the selected diet for 12 weeks. Do not allow your pet to eat any treats, snacks, bones, chew toys or human food during this time. Consuming one allergen as little as two times per week is enough to reactivate an allergic reaction.
3. Do not give any flavored medications or vitamins/supplements (heartworm preventative, Rimadyl, Cetyl-M, etc.). Discontinue any medication in capsules as the gelatin cap may trigger allergies. Contact us or your regular vet for alternative medications such as ProHeart 6 an injectable heartworm preventative during this trial period. Your doctor may also decide to use injectable antibiotics or cortisone.
4. Observe your pet for improvement in itchiness, face rubbing, ear infection, licking feet, eye discharge and red skin.

### **After Feeding Trial:**

1. If your pet showed significant improvement it is likely they are affected by food allergies. We can challenge the trial by giving a small amount of their original food or small amounts of chicken, beef, etc. to determine their specific allergens.
2. Once allergens are identified your pet can be maintained on their new diet or switched to an over-the-counter novel protein diet.
3. If your pet did not show improvement it is likely their allergies are environmental. Allergy testing may be performed to determine their specific allergens and formulate desensitization injections to treat their allergies. Pets with this type of allergy will often need life-long medications.
4. If your pet only shows mild improvement, it is possible they are suffering from both food allergies *and* environmental allergies. These pets may benefit from a diet change but will likely need desensitization injections and/or life-long medications.