

Dog Skin Conditions: Allergies

The cause, skin-related symptoms, and treatment of canine allergies.

Atopy

Flea allergy dermatitis

Photos courtesy David A. Senter, DVM

Cause: Inhaled substances such as dust mites and pollens (atopy or allergic inhalant dermatitis, an inherited condition); flea saliva (flea allergy dermatitis); contact with or ingestion of a triggering substance, including food ingredients.

Symptoms: Itching (often severe); skin rashes ranging from slight reddening to generalized inflammation with assorted bumps, pimples, and welt-like lesions; persistent ear infections. Secondary infections by bacteria and yeasts are common.

Treatment: Allergen avoidance, flea control, antihistamines, corticosteroids ("cortisone"), cyclosporine, and hyposensitization ("allergy shots"). Antibiotics and anti-yeast medications are used to treat secondary infections. Often a combination of therapies produces the best results.

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