

Surviving Springtime Allergy Season With Pets

ASPCA offers tips for staying sneeze-free amid pollen, dander, and other allergens.

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Friday marked the first day of spring, a good time to remind pet owners of some simple ways to prepare for the peak allergy season, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Steven Hansen, DVM, senior vice president of ASPCA Animal Health Services, said that pets suffer from allergies as well, but by following a few steps, you can survive the springtime allergy season with cats and dogs.

Here are some of the ways the ASPCA says pet owners can make this allergy season sneeze-free for humans and pets alike:

Don't blame the cat or dog. Hansen suggests visiting a specialist to determine the exact cause of allergy symptoms and to help alleviate them.

Keep a clean home. Be sure to clean the litterbox regularly. In addition, vacuum frequently, use an air purifier with a HEPA filter, and allow fresh air in the home daily.

Clean pets, too. Bathe your dog or cat in order to remove allergens that accumulate in fur. Brushing or combing pets frequently also helps to keep allergens at bay.

Create an allergen-free room. Hansen recommends using the bedroom as the most practical choice. "It's smart to use hypoallergenic bedding and pillow materials," he says. "Allergen-removing central air and furnace filters are another smart option." If you do have pet allergies, keeping pets out of the bedroom can be very helpful in minimizing symptoms.

Limit fabrics in your home. Allergens collect in rugs, drapes and upholstery, so do your best to limit them in your home. If fabrics are a part of your décor, steam-clean them regularly.

And remember – pets get seasonal allergies, too. "Dogs often get atopy, where they inhale allergens that cause excessively itchy skin, known as pruritis," said Louise Murray, DVM, director of medicine at the ASPCA Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital. "Medications and immunotherapy (de-sensitizing shots) can allow you and your companion animal to live happily together."