



Animal Hospital
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Springtime Allergies

BY Elizabeth Fazio, DVM, MPH, CVA

Spring is a great season everywhere! In Florida, it brings us warmer weather, tourism, and longer days. But it also brings pesky allergies that affect us all. Including our pets.

Allergens come in multiple forms, such as dust, molds, and pollens to bug and flea bites to foods. Pets, like humans, can suffer from environmental allergies, causing discomfort and health issues. Pets can be affected seasonally or year-round depending on what allergens their immune systems are hypersensitive to. When exposed to these allergens, pets may exhibit symptoms ranging from mild irritation to severe discomfort. The most common sign of allergies in pets is atopy.

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...Springtime Allergies Cont...

ATOPIY

Atopy is the itching, scratching, paw licking, and overall discomfort from allergies. Interestingly, atopy has a genetic basis. This means that some dogs and cats already have the genetic code to develop allergic diseases. Boxers, Labradors, Golden Retrievers, Shih Tzus, West Highland Terriers, Pugs and Dalmatians are some of the breeds predisposed to developing atopy. Owning one of these breeds does not automatically guarantee an itchy pet, but it is something to consider for their overall wellbeing. As many of us have experienced, atopy from allergies can be very frustrating for pets, their owners, and the veterinarians who treat them.

Because atopy is so common, and oftentimes severe, there are several treatment options. At-home care includes year-round flea and tick prevention and regular bathing or grooming. For pets that need veterinary assistance, products such as Apoquel or Cytopoint can bring them great relief. In some circumstances, steroids or other supplements may be utilized to reign in the itch.



FLEAS

Seasonal allergies are not the only reason for pets to itch.

One of the most common reasons here in Florida is fleas. Tampa Bay has the largest and most complex population of fleas in the country. We have so many fleas year round that flea and tick prevention companies test their products in Florida to ensure they are effective nationally.

Flea infestations can occur indoors or outdoors. Like mosquito bites, pets can have allergic reactions to flea bites. Fleas will inject their saliva into the pet they are feeding on. When the saliva enters the bloodstream, a hypersensitivity reaction can occur. Some pets experience this in the form of itchiness with or without the presence of a bite mark. While others can present with more severe symptoms such as swelling and redness around the eyes, lips, and ears. Cats can be so sensitive to flea bite allergies that their face turns red as a tomato!

WAYS YOU CAN SPOT ATOPY IN YOUR PET

1. **Itching and Scratching:** Pets may excessively scratch, lick, or chew on their skin, paws, or other body parts affected by allergies.
2. **Skin Irritation:** Allergic reactions can lead to redness, inflammation, rashes, and hot spots on the skin.
3. **Ear Infections:** Pets with environmental allergies may develop ear infections, leading to itchiness, foul odor, and discharge from the ears.
4. **Watery Eyes and Sneezing:** Similar to humans, pets may experience watery eyes, sneezing, and nasal congestion due to environmental allergens.
5. **Hair Loss:** Chronic scratching and licking can result in hair loss, particularly in areas where the skin is affected by allergies.
6. **Anemia:** In severe cases, particularly in young or small pets, flea infestations can lead to anemia due to blood loss from continuous feeding by fleas.

Environmental allergies and flea infestations require proper treatment and prevention measures to ensure the health and comfort of pets. Regular flea prevention and getting ahead of seasonal allergies can help keep you and your pet comfortable all year long.

Did You Know?

BY MICHAEL BARTHOLOMEW, DVM, MSTCVM

Your Pet's Gastrointestinal Biome

A disrupted gastrointestinal biome (the bacteria that live in the intestinal tract) can lead to a number of conditions including GI upsets like vomiting and diarrhea, itchy skin, and bad breath. **We now have the ability to test this biome and this test can detect harmful bacteria to your pet, find missing bacteria, check microbial imbalances and compare your pet's GI tract to that of a "normal" cat or dog.**

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