

## Monroe Pet Press

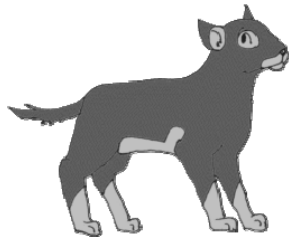
Published Quarterly by the MONROE ANIMAL HOSPITAL  
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Volume 2, Edition 1 - March 2009



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### Food Allergy in Dogs and Cats

Skin problems in dogs and cats are frequently seen. Often they have allergies as an underlying cause. The most common source of allergies in our pets are inhalant allergies (atopy) and food allergy. Both of these conditions can result in itchy patients who scratch, bite, or chew at themselves. The picture on the left



shows common areas affected in dogs. In addition, cats often develop signs on the chin or neck. Chronic ear infections are another indicator of a possible food allergy.

Food allergies in pets can also cause GI signs, including chronic vomiting and/or diarrhea. One sign that can be suggestive of this problem in pets is an individual animal whose signs are persistent year-round. Some breeds, such as Labrador retrievers and Cocker spaniels, are also more prone to food allergies.

One common misperception about food allergies is that a patient can not develop them if they have been on the same food for a long period of time. In fact the opposite is true. Animals develop allergies, which are an abnormal immune reaction to proteins, and these can take years to manifest themselves. The most common food allergens for dogs are: beef, dairy, and wheat. These three ingredients account for 68% of canine food allergies. The most common food allergens in cats are: beef, dairy, and fish. These three ingredients account for 80% of feline food allergies.

As opposed to the diagnosis of inhalant allergies, there are currently no blood or skin tests that are used by veterinary dermatologists to assist in the diagnosis of food allergy. The main test that is done to assess for a

food allergy is a diet trial. Two strategies that are currently used are novel protein or hydrolyzed diet.

A novel protein is a protein source that a patient has not eaten before. Options include venison, duck, salmon, whitefish, rabbit, kangaroo, etc. There are numerous brands of prescription foods that are made with these ingredients.



A hydrolyzed diet is one in which, the protein has been formulated (hydrolyzed) to be so small that it will not stimulate the immune system. This approach is often used in milk formulas for human infants with lactose allergies. The diet may also have used small carbohydrates as well to avoid the potential immune

response to proteins in the carbohydrate component of the diet. Examples of diets such as this are Hill's Z/d and Purina's HA. One potential advantage of hydrolyzed diets is that over time the pet's immune system should not develop new food allergies to these types of foods.

When using a food allergy diet, results should not be expected immediately. Animals with GI signs often improve in about a month, but those individuals with dermatological signs may take 4-12 weeks to show signs of improvement. One thing that is essential during a food allergy trial is for the owners not to let the dog eat any other protein sources. This includes treats, tablefood, flavored medications (including heartworm preventative), rawhide or other chews, flavored toothpastes, etc.) Owner compliance (and for that matter the cooperation of your family and friends) is essential for assessing success of a food allergy trial.

If your pet has been experiencing signs that may be attributed to a food allergy, please feel free to call us to discuss this further.

**Want Your Pets Medications or Prescription Diets Delivered To Your Door?** Explore our online pharmacy at [www.monroevet.net](http://www.monroevet.net)

### Options for Hard to Medicate Patients

Have you ever had a difficult time administering medications to your pet? Some newer options now exist to make it easier to ensure your pet receives the therapy he or she needs.

One drug that is now available is Convenia. This antibiotic injection is administered in the office to patients who may benefit by a cephalosporin type antibiotic. It is especially useful for bacterial skin infections. Once given, it is slowly released into the blood-stream over a two week period. It has been proven to be safe and effective and starts working within a few hours of administration. Its use ensures that no doses are missed or off-schedule, which increases the likelihood of treatment success. Side effects are rare, but like most antibiotics, can include upset stomach or diarrhea.

Another option for administering pills to pets is a product called Pill Pockets. Made by the Greenies Corporation, these tasty treats have a hollow center that is pinched around the medication. Most dogs and cats will take pills willingly when dispensed inside Pill Pockets. Many owners have found this to be an invaluable aid.



An additional alternative for patients who are reluctant to take medications, or for human medications that are available in forms too strong or unsuitable for animals, is compounding. Specialized pharmacies can make liquid medications into new flavors tailored to the size and tastes of individual animals. While not applicable in all cases, some medications can even be made into topical forms that are rubbed on the patient's ear and absorbed through their skin.

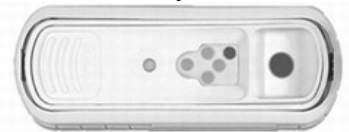
### Lyme Disease and Dogs

Many pet owners are concerned about their dogs or themselves contracting Lyme Disease. This bacteria, which is spread by infected ticks, is often seen in our area.

The Lyme organism lives inside the intestines of ticks. It is not transmitted as soon as the tick attaches to a dog. What happens is that ticks overfeed and prior to detaching release some of the blood they've consumed back into the animal. This is when spread of the bacteria occurs to the pet. Lyme in dogs can cause intermittent lameness, fevers, lethargy, and lack of appetite. In some cases it can affect the kidneys, causing kidney failure and protein loss (Lyme Nephropathy).

It is important to realize that, as opposed to people, the vast majority of dogs who are exposed to the Lyme bacteria DO NOT develop clinical signs. In some parts of the country 70-80% of dogs will test positive for exposure to this bacteria! Currently we do not recommend treatment of asymptomatic dogs. While antibiotics such as doxycycline will help improve signs in affected animals they do not rid the body of Lyme organisms; they only reduce their numbers.

We recommend a screening blood test be performed yearly on our canine patients, and we run this in combination with the annual heartworm test or senior wellness bloodwork. The Idexx 4Dx test we use not only checks for Lyme exposure, but also looks for exposure to two other tick-borne bacteria known as Anaplasma and Ehrlichia canis. It is important to realize that a dog that is exposed to Lyme or other tick illnesses will not test positive immediately; the test will only show exposure approximately two months after it has occurred



If a dog tests positive for Lyme, a urine specimen should be checked yearly to verify that no effects on the kidneys have occurred. Dogs that test positive for Anaplasma or Ehrlichia should have a complete blood cell count done as these organisms can affect blood cell number or function.

More important than treatment is prevention. We recommend all dogs be kept on flea and tick preventatives such as Frontline year-round. Lyme vaccination can prevent transmission of this disease and should be considered for all Lyme-negative dogs that may be exposed to ticks. More information on this important topic can be found online at [www.lymeprevention.com](http://www.lymeprevention.com)