

# Pets with Dr. Jyl

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[PET ALLERGIES \(4/17/02\)](#)

This week Dr. Jyl stopped by to talk about pet allergies. There are a lot of people who are allergic to pets, but we often forget that our little companions can have allergies too. Assisting Dr. Jyl was Hiedi, who belongs to Codi and Payton Beck of Roseville.

**Symptoms:** Vomiting shortly after eating; Dry heaves after eating; Diarrhea; Itching

**Food Allergies:** The most common type of allergy in pets is food-related. Anything can be an allergen. The most common are wheat and corn. Even the meat in your pet's diet can be at the root cause of your pet's symptoms. Unfortunately most commercial pet foods list wheat or corn as the first ingredient in their products. This can make purchasing food difficult if your pet does in fact have an allergy to wheat and corn. Signs of food related allergies might include vomiting, diarrhea, pattern baldness especially around the eyes and mouth, itchy skin and/or feet and hot spots. The easiest way to cure this problem is to immediately switch to a food that is wheat, corn free. Also change the meat your animal has been eating. If your animal has never had lamb in his or her diet, you may be able to switch to a lamb and rice food. Turkey, rabbit or fish based foods are also good alternative choices. You may have to start shopping for pet food in specialty stores or through a mail order program but in the long run you will still spend less money purchasing the food than making frequent visits to your veterinarian.



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**Environmental/Inhalant Allergies:** Other reasons for allergies may be chemicals in or around the home. These products are highly toxic and could easily irritate an animal's skin, eyes, and respiratory system. Animals are much more sensitive to chemicals than humans and if it isn't safe for you to handle, it is more so for your pet. Unfortunately, it is usually a lengthy and expensive process to figure out what type of allergy each individual may have. So before you spend thousands of dollars on veterinary bills take a look at the ingredients in your pet food, look around your house at all the products you are using, and see if you notice any changes by eliminating those things from your pet's environment. Take the time from the beginning to think of all the different "influences" your pet has been exposed to. This will save you much time and frustration in a lengthy and often pain-staking effort.



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Here are some suggestions of what you can look for: Household cleaners, floor waxes, air fresheners, etc.; Carpet powders; Laundry detergent used to wash bedding for your pet; Pesticides, yard chemicals, fertilizers; Flea and tick preventatives; If all else fails, consult your veterinarian.

## What are the most common allergies affecting dogs and cats?

For both animals, the two leading causes of allergic reactions are flea bites and pollen. These are followed by food allergies. There is no one food that is more likely to cause an allergic reaction than others. Corn, wheat, beef, chicken, dairy products, you name it - if it's eaten, there are some dogs and cats that are going to be allergic to it.

## What substances cause an allergic reaction in an animal?

Substances can be any one of a number of things, from pollen, foods, dust, microorganisms.

## Do allergies in dogs and cats show themselves in the same way as allergies in people?

They can, but the allergic reactions of dogs and cats usually manifest themselves in the form of itchy skin, rather than runny eyes or watery noses. Even when an animal is allergic to food, the symptoms will show up as a skin rash, as often - or more often - than they will as a gastrointestinal problem.

## What is the treatment for allergies?

Eliminating the dog or cat's exposure to the cause of the allergy is the best treatment. Allergies usually can't be cured, so try to control the symptoms. You can also build up the animal's immunity to some allergies through injections of very small amounts of the antigen.

## Are dogs more prone to develop allergies than cats? And are any breeds of dogs more prone to develop allergies than others?

Dogs with allergies are slightly more common than cats. In terms of breeds, small terriers such as the West Highland, Scottish, and Jack Russell are more prone to flea and pollen allergies, as are Golden Retrievers and Chow Chows.