

## **ALLERGIC DERMATITIS GENERAL INFORMATION**

Sometimes a severe reaction occurs between a substance and the immune system of the body. This is called an "ALLERGIC REACTION," and may be caused by dust, weeds, molds, grass, FOODS, FLEAS, as well as many other materials.

**In humans, the reaction that occurs usually affects the respiratory system, causing breathing problems--such as asthma.** Due to the type reaction that occurs within the body, it is possible in many cases to build a person's resistance through a series of injections containing small amounts of the allergy substances.

A DIFFERENT type of chemical reaction usually occurs in the body of the dog and cat. The **MAJOR** sign that occurs as a result of this particular type of allergic reaction is usually *ITCHING*. The itching causes the pet to chew and scratch; which, in turn causes more damage to the skin. The skin often becomes infected or thickened from prolonged chewing and scratching. **Antigen injections similar to human therapy are often beneficial to these cases.**

Some allergic reactions occur as soon as exposure occurs, but **most reactions are DELAYED**; and don't become evident for 3-7 days after the exposure. This can make determination of the causative agent very difficult. Often a pet that develops an allergy will develop OTHER allergies later in life, which makes control even more frustrating at times.

An ALLERGY **NEVER** develops the first time exposure occurs. It takes **TIME** for the body to develop an allergy to a particular substance. **This is the reason many pets do NOT develop an allergy until the later years of life.**

**The most COMMON allergy seen in the dog and cat is the RESULT OF FLEA BITES!** The pet becomes allergic to the PROTEIN in the SALIVA of the flea. The reaction CAN occur after ONLY ONE FLEA BITE!! Many times there will be NO fleas on the pet when it is examined, which causes the owner to question the diagnosis. **Remember--MOST ALLERGIC REACTIONS OCCUR 3-7 DAYS AFTER THE EXPOSURE TO THE ALLERGENIC SUBSTANCE.**

**Allergies are often NOT PREVENTABLE; but CONTROL with medications is effective, PROVIDED the owner will follow our instructions and continue treatment. YOU must be PATIENT and REALIZE that the condition PROBABLY WILL RECUR throughout the pet's life, if and when exposure occurs.**

**The SECRET is to get proper medical attention as soon as signs of allergy are seen.** Prompt treatment will prevent the skin lesions from becoming more severe.

Our INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS are to control flea infestation. Fighting fleas is a constant war because:

1. The flea's life cycle can involve more than one year's time.
2. Most of the life cycle of the flea occurs OFF the pet.
3. Premises may be contaminated with fleas from other animals.

**Fleas must be kept off the pet to control the allergic reaction.** The recent introduction of new, much more effective, flea products such as **FRONTLINE TOPSPOT™**, has helped tremendously. Treatment of the house and yard is sometimes still necessary in areas highly infested with fleas.

Once flea allergy is eliminated or controlled, then we can move on to other aspects of the problem--such as food allergy, contact allergy, and inhaled allergies. We find that if the flea allergy can be controlled, it then becomes much easier to control the other problems in most cases. We highly recommend "allergy testing" in dogs with recurrent allergies or those that have allergies all year long.