



1-877-604-8366  
www.dermatologyforanimals.com

## **What You Always Wanted to Know About Dog Foods But Didn't Know Who to Ask**

### **Can my dog be allergic to something in its food?**

Yes but the incidence is low. Only about 4-8% of itchy dogs have allergies to an ingredient in their food. Generally itchy dogs are allergic to something in the air or parasites.

### **I have never changed my dog's food so how could he possibly be allergic to it?**

The food does not have to be changed for an animal to become allergic to a particular ingredient. Over time, or suddenly, an animal can become allergic to an ingredient that it has tolerated for years.

### **Is my dog less likely to have allergies if I feed a grain free diet?**

**No.** Dogs very seldom become allergic to grains which are a carbohydrate source. Generally dogs become allergic to the protein or meat in the diet. Grain free diets do not prevent a dog from becoming allergic to airborne substances.

### **Is my dog less likely to have allergies if I make sure to feed a diet that does not have corn in it?**

**No.** Corn is responsible for only 3% of allergies to food.

### **I always feed a diet of buffalo, venison, duck, kangaroo, fish or rabbit, so is it still possible for my dog to develop allergies to its food?**

**Yes.** There is nothing hypo-allergenic about these protein sources and with time it is possible for an animal to become allergic to them.

### **How do I know if my dog has an allergy to food?**

To conduct a food trial, you will feed a prescription diet that has a hydrolyzed protein source such as Hill's Prescription Diet z/d or a prescription diet that has a novel protein source (a new protein the animal has never had exposure to), such as duck, venison, rabbit or kangaroo for 8 to 12 weeks. If your dog has a food allergy, you will see a marked decrease in the amount of scratching your dog does when eating the new food.

### **Can I feed my dog treats during a feeding trial?**

To accurately determine whether or not your dog has a food allergy, you should avoid feeding table scraps, non-prescription treats sold at pet stores or on-line, or foods other than the food prescribed for the trial. We can provide tasty hydrolyzed protein treats to be used during the feeding trials. You can also use both canned and dry forms of the prescription diet trial food. We encourage the use of a little canned food or a few kibbles of dry food as treats.

### **Blood was taken from my dog and submitted to a laboratory. The results indicate that my animal is allergic to several foods. Why can't I choose a diet omitting the foods this test showed my dog to be allergic to?**

Because several carefully designed studies have demonstrated no correlation between these test results and what an animal truly is or is not allergic to.



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**The prescription novel protein food that I buy from my veterinarian is more expensive than those that are sold at pet stores. To save money can I do a diet trial using a novel protein diet sold in pet stores?**

**No.** For the following reasons.

1. Studies conducted at an independent food analysis laboratory demonstrated that the novel protein diets sold in pet stores are often contaminated with small amounts of protein other than that indicated on the label. For example: a diet labeled as venison will often have small amounts of beef in it.
2. By law, manufacturers of nonprescription novel protein diets can change the diet ingredients for up to four months without changing the label on the bag. Therefore, a manufacturer could legally label a diet as containing venison, but later decide venison is in short supply or too expensive, and choose to substitute beef. The manufacturer could continue this substitution for 4 months without changing the label as long as they switched back to venison by the end of 4 months.

**What is a good food to feed my dog that has airborne allergies?**

We recommend Sensitive Skin (by Hill's Science Diets) which has very high levels of omega-3 fatty acids that can help to block inflammation in the skin.

**What is the best food to feed my dog?**

If you have a normal dog there is no one **best** food to feed. Look for AAFCO statement or statement of nutritional adequacy somewhere on the side or back or a pet food bag. We recommend feeding a food that has been proven through feeding tests or trials. Avoid foods that are only **formulated to meet** standards and instead choose a food that mentions **trials** or **tests** in the AAFCO statement. Avoid foods that are listed as being for **all lifestages**. Those that are for **growth** (if for puppies or kittens) or **maintenance** (if for adult dogs) will more specifically meet the nutritional needs of your pet. Choose a food from a name brand company that your animal likes and that keeps your animal lean with a shiny coat.