

Flea Allergy

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Overview

Flea allergy dermatitis is the most common allergy in dogs and cats. It is caused by flea bites, specifically skin reactions from the saliva of the flea. It is a very itchy disease and predisposes to the development of secondary skin infections.

Oddly enough, most animals with flea allergy have very few fleas – because they are so itchy, they groom themselves excessively, eliminating any evidence of fleas. However, a couple of flea bites every two weeks are sufficient to make a flea allergic dog itchy all the time. Any animal can become allergic to fleas, although some pets are more attractive to fleas than others.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Flea allergy is generally diagnosed with a thorough history and physical examination, and seeing fleas on the animal. If no fleas are seen and the animal has a positive response to flea control, flea allergy can be diagnosed.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Pets with flea allergy must be treated with flea preventative. Skin infections are treated with antibiotics and the intense itching may be treated with antihistamines or corticosteroids. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.
- Prevention: The most important part of treatment is preventing flea bites with aggressive flea control on your pet and in the environment.

What to Watch for*:

- Severe itching
- Chewing and biting the tail, rump, back legs
- Oozing lesions from chewing
- Hot spots on hips and face from intense scratching

Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!

