

## Scratch That Itch: Understanding and Managing Itchy Pets



As pet owners, we know how uncomfortable itchy pets can be. Whether it's incessant scratching, biting, or licking, watching our furry friends suffer from itchiness can be distressing. But what causes itchy skin in pets, and how can we help them find relief? There are many reasons why your pet may be itchy. Some of the most common reasons are parasites, allergies and infections.

### **Why Your Dog Might be Itchy:**

#### *Parasites:*

Fleas and ticks can irritate your pet's skin. Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD) is one of the top causes of skin itch and irritation in pets. Flea bites cause FAD, and it is important to remember that they can cause extreme itchiness on any part of your pet's body but are most commonly found on the ears, legs, and tails.

#### *Allergies:*

Environmental factors are another main cause of itchiness and irritation on your pet's skin. Dust, mold spores, and pollen are a few of the main triggers for allergies in both pets and humans. Environmental triggers can cause allergic reactions all year but may pick up seasonally (spring allergies).

Your pet's diet can also contribute to allergic reactions. Pets can have allergies to ingredients common in pet food, such as gluten, chicken, beef, and dairy products. Food allergies can lead to irritation, itchiness, and swelling in your pet.

#### *Infections:*

Excessive scratching or licking can cause skin irritation in pets. This irritation can become infected if exposed to bacteria or fungi. Skin infections can often be indicative of underlying issues, so it is important to make a veterinary appointment

#### **Signs and Symptoms:**

Common symptoms of allergies in pets are not dissimilar to humans. Keep an eye out for:

- Runny eyes or nose
- Sneezing
- Itchy, dry, or red skin
- Flaky, crusty, or moist skin
- Excessive licking, chewing, biting, or scratching
- Body odor
- Repeated issues in the ears

If you notice any of these symptoms in your pet, call us! We can run diagnostic tests to determine the cause of your pet's discomfort and recommend appropriate treatment options.

#### **Treatment Options:**

##### *Parasites:*

The best treatment for parasites and the effects they cause is prevention. Make sure you are giving your pet heartworm, flea, and tick preventatives each month. If your pet has a parasite, make an appointment with us, and we can prescribe the best treatment method.

##### *Allergies:*

Environmental triggers can often be treated by over-the-counter medications, special shampoos, and other options. If your pet continues to experience allergies, we can diagnose their specific allergy through a simple blood test. Once your pet is diagnosed, we can start them on a customized treatment plan. If your pet suffers from a food allergy, you can try swapping their diet or giving them special, allergy-friendly food.

##### *Infections:*

Once the cause of your pet's skin infection is determined, we will be able to treat it effectively with medication, topical ointments, or antibiotics. You can also prevent these infections from originating by regularly bathing your pet to remove any bacteria from the skin.

Ultimately, it is important to ensure you are treating the underlying issue. Only treating the surface-level itch will provide temporary comfort to your pet, but that relief will not last forever. Make sure to bring your pet in for an appointment so that we can diagnose the issue and make sure we are treating the root cause of the itch. If you have any questions, give us a call! We're here for you!

