

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Dear Dr. Schmidt,

With allergy season right around the corner, is there anything I can do to keep my dog from itching and scratching himself into oblivion?

Thank you, Michelle

Dear Michelle,

You are so right! Seasonal allergies are just around the corner and can make both pets and owners miserable. As in people, there are numerous antidotes out there, and they all have mixed results and side effects. Some of the safest, but also least effective, medications are the over the counter Antihistamines. When they do work, you're in like flint because they are usually inexpensive and have minimal side effects. Check with your veterinarian before using any of these to discuss the risks and side effects for your pet, and to ensure that they don't interfere with any other medications your pet may be taking. When those remedies do not help, some pets may benefit from steroids like Prednisone which can be a very effective way to control the itching. However, this medication can have not only annoying side effects like increased thirst and urinations, but also have the potential to cause serious long term health damage. These issues need to be discussed in detail with your veterinarian before using. As for a safer, long term treatment, we can do allergy testing by using skin or blood tissue to find out exactly what the pet is allergic to, and then make a vaccine mixture to give them either by injection or an oral solution which desensitizes them to the offending allergen. Another oral, safer medication is also available that helps control the immune system to help your pet tolerate allergies better. Even though these 2 products can be more expensive, the side effects are minimal, and they can have a longer lasting result. Finally, there is a brand new oral medication that was just released this January called Apoquel which shows great promise for our allergic, itchy dogs without the side effects mentioned above. If it pans out as advertised, it will spell RELIEF for thousands of dogs and their owners. Please feel free to call and ask us about this product at any time. So there you have it Michelle, plenty of options available to discuss with your veterinarian to find out which treatment will be best suited for your dogs' allergies.

Have a great summer, Dr. Doug



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