



Elimination Diet Trial



Animals may develop sensitivity to components in the diet either alone or with other causes such as those associated with atopic dermatitis or atopy (e.g. house dust mites, pollens). It is therefore important to consider the role of food allergens (these are the components which cause the allergic reaction) in animals affected by allergic skin disease as well as other possible triggers (environmental allergens e.g. house dust mite).





The preferred method of investigating food allergy is to feed a novel or limited diet (trial or hypoallergenic diet) for a 6 – 8 week trial period. Food allergy develops over time and therefore usually involves an ingredient(s) present in the diet for some time and not an ingredient which has been recently introduced.

At the end of the trial diet period, if the skin disease improves, the original diet is re-introduced in order to confirm that something in the original diet is the cause. The skin disease in dogs with food allergy should improve or resolve whilst on the trial 'hypoallergenic diet' and recur once the original diet is re-introduced.

There are three acceptable approaches to an elimination or hypoallergenic diet trial:

- 1. Novel protein diet** which is a commercially prepared diet which contains a protein your pet has not previously eaten.
- 2. Hydrolysed diet** which is also commercially prepared but undergoes a process which breaks the protein into smaller units. The theory is that the smaller protein particles pass through the gut without triggering an allergic reaction.
- 3. Home cooked diet** where a simplified diet containing a protein and a carbohydrate is prepared at home. Ideally the protein and carbohydrate sources should be novel for your pet. Water can be used for cooking, but no flavourings or supplements can be added for the duration of the trial period.



-  The guidelines given on commercial diets should be referred to and your pet fed the amount suggested for its own weight.
-  Only water should be offered to drink.
-  Any change in diet should be introduced gradually over a 3 - 5 day period.
-  It is important that all treats should be stopped and if you feel you must feed at times other than a main meal, small amounts of the trial diet can be given.

Other foodstuffs which must be avoided for the trial period include:

- Titbits given with medications. Medications should be given alone or with some of the trial hypoallergenic diet.
- Some medications are flavoured and may need to be changed to an alternative type.
- Pet toothpastes are often flavoured and may need to be avoided.
- Some toys may be impregnated with flavourings.
- Chews, scraps and bones should not be given for the duration of the diet trial.
- “Hypoallergenic” treats are widely available but may not be compatible with the trial diet. It is helpful if all family members and other people who come into contact with your pet are fully informed of the requirements for the trial diet. Although these rules may seem strict, remember that it is only for a limited time and the information gained can be very valuable for the successful management of the animal’s skin problem.

