Managing Pet Allergies

Your clients may not always have a complete understanding of their pets’ medical conditions, causing you to deal with unforeseen problems that make your visits take longer and become more involved. Working with your clients and their vets to manage allergy attacks through natural means can help you better care for the pets you sit and you improve your bottom line.

Allergies

Allergies that occur in pets cause them to itch and scratch their skin, experience respiratory problems, discharge fluids from their noses and mouths, and experience digestive problems which cause vomiting and diarrhea. Causes that trigger allergy attacks include contact with other animals, humans and various materials, fleas, foods, and environmental factors, such as dust and mold, according to Dr. Karen Kuhl, a board-certified veterinary dermatologist at the Midwest Veterinary Dermatology Center in Buffalo Grove, Ill.

Identification

Speaking on a podcast at the American Veterinary Medical Association website, Dr. Kuhl recommends starting identification of a pets’ specific allergy by working with the pets’ vet. If the pet has a food-related allergy, you can work with the vet and parent using a food elimination strategy to pinpoint the allergen. Flea-induced allergies often manifest themselves on the back half of the animal, according to Dr. Kuhl. Environmental allergies can cause animals to lick their feet, rub their face, experience ear, eyes and nose problems.

Management

If the problem is flea-induced, you can begin a flea-control program. Holistic methods for flea control include adding garlic, brewer’s yeast and/or Omega-3 fatty acids to the pets diet. Look for mold, excessive dust or household chemicals which might be causing allergic reactions. Traditional remedies for environmental allergies include allergy shots and antihistamines. Talk with the pets’ veterinarian if you want suggestions for natural antihistamines.

Reading nutrition labels on pet food is critical to managing allergies, according to Peter Kaufman, owner of NAPPS corporate partner, Complete Natural Nutrition, a maker of all-natural pet foods and treats. “If you can’t pronounce the words on the food label, that’s a red flag that the food might be a problem,” Kaufman advises. “You don’t have to be a vet or dietician to manage your pet’s diet—start by reading and learning about the ingredients in the food you feed your pet. Simple is better, less is more...especially when managing allergies.”

Use Teamwork

The most effective way to help manage allergies in pets is to involve the veterinarian, pet parent and the sitter. Each will play a different role, and eliminating one’s participation will make any attempt at allergy management less effective. The pet parent can help the vet create the history needed to identify the source of the problem. The vet can then make a proper diagnosis and recommend the best treatments and management strategy. The pet parent and pet sitter can then work together to coordinate creating a diet and environment which will minimize a pet’s exposure to allergy-inducing triggers.

For more information on managing pet allergies, visit the following websites:

Complete Natural Nutrition allergy page www.allergy-free-dog-treats.info or www.allergy-free-cat-treats.info

AVMA’s “Scratch and Sniffle” podcast with Dr. Karen Kuhl www.avmamedia.org/display.asp?sid=258&tid=207&NAME=Scratch_and_Sniffle