



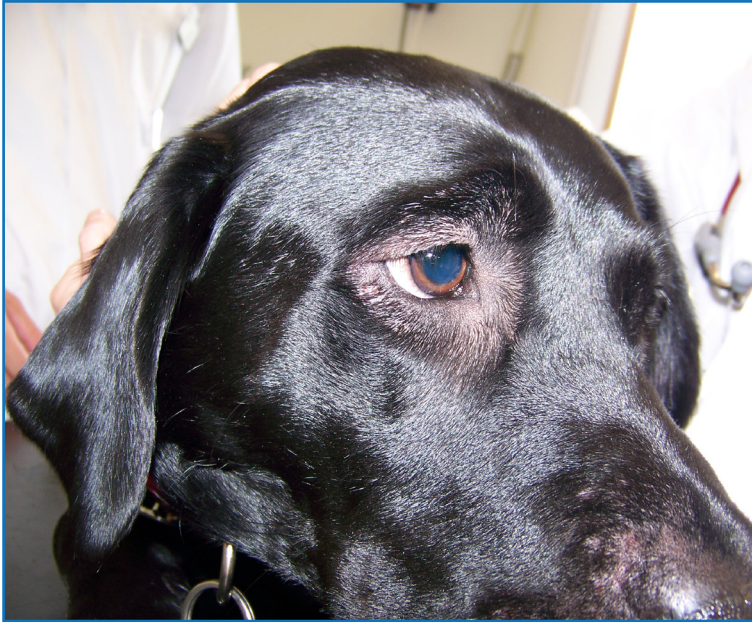
Southern Counties

VETERINARY
SPECIALISTS

Atopic Dermatitis

Information Sheet

**Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists
Specialist Referral Service**



The signs of atopic dermatitis

These allergies can cause symptoms such as itching, scratching, rashes, sneezing, watery eyes, body chewing/licking, conjunctivitis, and skin inflammation. The constant itching can then lead to hair loss, infection or skin reddening and thickening.

What is atopic dermatitis?

Atopic dermatitis is an inflammatory, chronic skin disease associated with allergies and is one of the most common skin conditions in dogs and cat. Allergic reactions can be brought on by normally harmless substances like dust mites, plant pollens, mould spores, and certain food items. Atopic dermatitis can occur as young as 6 months old but sometimes so mild in the first year that it does not become clinically apparent before the third year. It is thought that there may be predisposing genetic factors, but it is not contagious.

How is atopic dermatitis investigated by the veterinary surgeon?

There are allergy tests which can be used to identify what the pet is allergic to. Two types of allergy tests are the intradermal allergy test and blood tests. Intradermal allergy testing includes shaving the fur on one side of the chest and then small amounts of common allergens are injected under the skin which is observed for an immediate reaction. In a blood allergy test, a blood sample is sent to a laboratory and the protein levels (antibodies) to the allergens are measured.

The most commonly affected areas include:

- Ears
- Wrists
- Ankles
- Nose & mouth
- Underarms
- Groin
- Around the eyes
- Between toes

The symptoms associated with atopic dermatitis can worsen over time and are more apparent during certain seasons for some allergies.

What treatment options are available?

Pets with this disease are highly likely to have it for the whole of their life so it is a condition that requires management rather than cure. For a pet diagnosed with atopic dermatitis, there are three methods of therapy available to manage it.

Avoiding the allergens: It can be tricky to completely remove the allergens affecting your pet because even small amounts can cause negative reactions. Some can be reduced such as hoovering/dusting regularly to minimise dust mites. In some cases bathing the animals could remove the allergens or dandruff from the skin and then using a hypoallergenic foam rinse or spray to re-moisturise the skin after. Avoiding walking a dog in the early morning or evening can be advantageous due to high pollen counts during this time.

Medication: Anti-allergy drugs are available to help treat atopic dermatitis which include antihistamines, steroids, cyclosporine, and oclacitinib. Not all medication will work for each pet so it can be necessary to try a few. It

is important to be aware of the side effects of each drug before giving it to a pet which the vet will run through.

Allergen specific immunotherapy: During immunotherapy a series of diluted allergens are injected into the pet. This treatment can take time before it works and it is important to commit to the immunotherapy for several months so it can take effect.

Important: Fleas or bacterial infection can worsen the itching from these allergies so it is important to treat other health problems linked to itching in order to help manage your pet's allergies.

What is the prognosis (outcome) for my pet?

As mentioned this is likely to be a lifelong disease which requires continued management, but with consistent treatment the pet can lead a normal, healthy life. Periodic examinations with a vet can help keep it under control, especially if there are more sensitive months such as pollen in summer.





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