

<< Paco (3yr old PWD) has developed an allergy to something?!? and we can't figure it out. Hoping someone out there has an idea that we haven't tried. It started in January. He goes after his feet with vengeance. Tested for environmental and came back fine. We have eliminated grain, wheat, turkey, put him on bottled water. We are using derma tabs twice daily. We used pill form of steroid, mildest level we could which is for cats, and only a quarter tab, twice a day for 5 days, once a day for five days and then once every other day. We were hoping to go to just benedril after, as soon as we did he was after the feet again. >>

-----Original Message-----

From: Millerk9@aol.com

To: CanineWaterSports@yahoogroups.com

Sent: Thu, 24 Jul 2008 10:50 am

Subject: [CanineWaterSports] Re: Allergy

Hi -

Sorry to be coming in on this late, but this is the first chance I could get to reply.

You've received a lot of good advice, especially from Cynthia Fox. But I have a couple of comments/suggestions that might be helpful.

I own a 10 year old PWD who has licked and eaten her feet - *daily* - since she was 8 months old. So I've tried everything. And I do mean *everything*. I also run the largest holistic vet practice in the country, so I've also seen just about every allergy condition that can be imagined. I offer that info just so you can put it in some kind of context.

1. You indicated that your dog responded favorably to steroids and that when the steroids were eliminated he was back eating at his feet. This is a 100% indication that the foot-licking is *not* a behavioral issue. Behavioral issues do not respond to steroids, allergy issues do. Steroid-responsive means that you are more than likely dealing with atopy - aka inhalant allergies. Atopy is a genetic issue most (though not all) the time. Licking of the feet and the butt are classic atopy symptoms.

2. I know he was tested for environmental allergies and that the tests didn't show anything. But - *if* the tests were blood tests, be aware that blood testing for inhalant allergies is notoriously unreliable. Also, they only test for the most common allergens. If your dog isn't reacting to the most common allergens, then nothing is going to show. Finally, testing for inhalant allergens is mostly an intellectual exercise. Short of keeping a dog in a bubble, it's nearly impossible to prevent them from having contact with the world and the things to which they are allergic.

3. If your dog is licking at his feet on a regular basis because of the *primary* itching caused by the atopy, he is probably - at times - developing a *secondary* yeast infection. Yeast will grow anytime it has constant dark, damp conditions - like a paw that is constantly damp. The yeast makes the already itchy foot that much itchier. I can always tell when my girl gets yeast because the foot biting and licking go up a notch in duration and intensity.

The cheapest, easiest way to treat for a yeast infection: a solution of half vinegar and half water. Yeast can't grow in acidic conditions. Use a little plastic cup to dip each of the feet in and then pat dry. Or, put the solution in a squeeze bottle and thoroughly wet the bottom

of the foot, between all the pads, and between the toes. When you believe yeast might be present, treating twice a day for 3 to 4 days will usually solve the problem.

Remember, treating the yeast will **not** make **all** the itching go away, because the yeast is a **secondary** issue to the **primary** itching of the atopy. But getting rid of the yeast can certainly make your dog a lot more comfortable.

If the vinegar solution isn't helping, a few rinses with Malaseb Flush usually takes care of the problem. It comes in a squeeze bottle. Use as noted above and work it in to all the areas between the pads and toes. Pat the foot dry. Try to watch the dog for 30 minutes just to make sure they don't start licking it. Most dogs don't and even if they do it's not really going to hurt them. But it's still better if they don't end up licking a bunch of it up.

Remember that dogs who lick their feet regularly can get secondary yeast infections at **any** time of the year. I probably end up treating my girl for yeast about 12 to 14 times per year.

4. Try to keep the hair on the bottom of your dog's feet short. Not shaved like a poodle, just short. Short hair means that less moisture is held in the foot which makes it less of a breeding ground for yeast. Also - though atopy is inhalant, my experience is that most these dogs also have a certain amount of contact allergy issues. So keeping the hair on the feet short makes it less of a dust mop that keeps and collects irritating allergens.

5. If you have the time, energy and inclination:

after your dog has been outside and will be indoors for awhile (even if you only do this at night before going to bed): rinse your dog's feet in plain water. Get between the pads and between the toes. This will wash off possible allergens that have collected. Then use a blow dryer to dry the feet and reduce the likelihood of yeast developing. The blow dryer can be used any time your dog has wet feet and you have the time to thoroughly dry them.

6. As for treating the atopy itself: Cynthia offered a lot of suggestions about generally providing support to a dog's immune system. And you're already doing a bunch of good stuff. The cleaner the diet and the more general support the immune system has, the easier things will be for your dog.

That said, I will tell you that with my dog, after trying **everything** possible under the guidance of nationally known veterinarians from both the holistic and conventional medicine world, I did end up having to use Pred on a daily basis once she was 2.5 years old. That decision was not made lightly. But it became a quality of life issue. She was Pred-free but absolutely miserable - to the point that she didn't even want to step outside and ran away from me in the house when I asked her go out (to pee, etc.).

What I did do different was that I used much less Pred than vets normally recommend. For many years I gave only 1.25 mg per day which is less than what is known as "physiological replacement" (which is basically the amount the body should be producing anyway). When she turned 8, I needed to up her to 2.5 mg a day - still at a physiological replacement level. Like us, their immune systems function less well as they age, so she simply needed more help.

So, while most vets will dose to "eliminate" the symptoms, I elected to use doses that just **manage** the symptoms. "D" licks every day, multiple times a day. But **never** to a point of

opening the skin on her feet, and *never* to the point of limping because her feet are so raw. The licking indicates that she is clearly uncomfortable, but it's manageable for her and me. By opting for "management", I have been able to keep the Pred at levels that have not wreaked havoc on her body.

"D" is, as I mentioned, 10 years old now. She is lean and very vital. She has some degenerative joint disease in one elbow and that is slowing her down now, but it's just slowing her down (not "stopping" her) and she still leads her pack and goes on long off-leash walks 5 days a week - during which she does a lot of running and some swimming. Her liver values are *slightly* higher than I'd like, and that is due to the Pred, but still, she does not manifest any direct liver problems. So, I have a happy, healthy, Pred-taking 10 year old.

She has always eaten a raw diet and she has not had a vaccine since she was 3. I have chosen not to use heartworm medication for her (ever) but I do heartworm testing 3 times a year. She does get supplements to support her immune system, joints and liver. I think all of these things have reduced the adverse effects of Pred and have contributed to being able to manage her atopy.

Hope some of this is helpful to you and Paco.

Melinda Miller

<http://www.allivet.com/Malaseb-Flush-p/25594.htm>

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-----Original Message-----

From: wizkid@supplyguys.net

To: CanineWaterSports@yahoogroups.com

Sent: Mon, 21 Jul 2008 10:20 pm

Subject: Re: [CanineWaterSports] Allergy

Hi Stacy,

I make my living as a consultant to the upmarket/wholistic pet industry and nutrition is one of my best things. Allergies can have a genetic component, however, the underlying cause of most allergies is a compromised immune system. When allergies appear very young it can be auto-immune (usually, under 1 year - different for each dog). I used to get all hung up about what they are allergic to - not so much, anymore. Something is punching holes in Paco's immune system. You

need to do everything you can to plug up the holes.

Here's my program for a dog with allergies: switch to a diet with maximum bio-availability - that means RAW! Do the research - no carbs, minimal quantities of veg, etc. Stop all vaccines aside from what the law requires with rabies (see Dr. Randall Schultz's research, University of Wisconsin). Stop all systemic pesticides - that means Frontline, flea/tick collars with pesticides and heartworm. (Do bloodwork spring and fall to test for heartworm.) Stop spraying any chemicals in your yard. Be careful with all cleaning products in your home.

Dogs chew their feet because the foot has large quantities of histamines and feet are convenient. The palms of my hands itch when I eat a certain nut - same thing. Do everything you can to protect and build Paco's immune system. I always prefer to do this with quality nutrition - not playing kitchen chemist with a thousand different supplements that may tax the liver and kidneys.

In my opinion, the best prepared, commercial raw diet is a product called Morigins - manufactured in Ohio. When you wade into feeding raw, you will find it is as much religion as it is science. People are rabid with their opinions about raw diets. Find what works for you and your animal family.

Hope this helps,
Cynthia Fox, PhD
Fox Associates