

THE ULTIMATE SENSITIVE SKIN TOOLKIT



Who's itching for information?

By Narelle Cooke and The Skin Allergy Avengers
Edited by animal health writer Rebecca Salvatore



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Skin Allergy Avengers	8
Allergies In Dogs	10
Common Allergy Symptoms	10
Common Types of Allergy	11
Factors that Increase the Risk Of Allergy	12
What's the Problem in Spring?	15
The Skin and Allergies	16
Allergic Skin Disease	16
The Role of Omega-3 Fatty Acids	18
How Does Antinol Plus Support Skin Health?	19
The Role of Stress in Skin Health	20
Spot the Signs of Stress in Your Dog	21
The Four Faces of Anxiety in Dogs	22
Ways to Manage Stress and Anxiety in Your Dog	23



The Importance of Gut Health	26
Allergies and a Leaky Gut	26
How Raw Food Can Help With Allergies	28
What Does the Science Say?	29
Raw Food to Restore the Microbiome	30
Dietary Recommendations	32
The Importance of Avoiding High-Histamine Foods	33
Herbal Teas	34
Lifestyle Recommendations	36
Managing Allergies at Home	36
Springtime Grooming Tips	38
Targeted Supplementation	40
Stabilise Mast Cells	40
Balance the Immune System	42
Restore Gut Health	44
Final Words	49





***20% to 30%* of all dogs present with some form of allergic dermatitis**

Navigating the intricate world of pet health can often feel overwhelming, particularly when it comes to allergies. Whether it's incessant itching, frequent ear infections, or troubling gastrointestinal symptoms, allergic reactions in dogs can manifest in various ways and cause both you and your pet considerable distress.

The situation is compounded by documented increases in specific allergic conditions affecting dogs. Reports indicate that some types of allergies, such as environmental and flea allergies, have seen a dramatic rise over the past decade. Given this trend, the importance of being proactive about your dog's health has never been greater. Being well-informed about

the potential allergens, recognising early signs of allergic reactions, and consulting a veterinarian for timely diagnosis and treatment can make all the difference. This evolving landscape makes it crucial for dog owners to be vigilant, informed, and proactive in managing their pet's allergies. It's not just about dealing with symptoms as they arise, but also about pre-emptive care and creating an environment that minimises the risk of allergic reactions in the first place.

This guide aims to empower you with the knowledge and holistic tools you need to better manage your dog's allergies and improve their overall quality of life.

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NATURAL ANIMAL HEALTH

Narelle Cooke

AND *THE* *SKIN ALLERGY* *AVENGERS*

Rescuing Your Dog from the *ITCH* – Together

Hi, I'm Narelle Cooke, founder of CanineCeuticals and an accredited clinical naturopath, nutritionist and herbalist. I originally wrote this book to support my clients and offer a guide to holistically caring for your allergic dog.

During my journey, I have worked with an incredible array of people and brands who are all striving for the same ends: To keep your companion happy, healthy and enjoying life for as long as possible.

Managing your dog's allergies can be a daunting prospect. Sometimes, you can feel helpless, watching them scratch themselves raw. So, we have joined forces. Some of the most knowledgeable names in the pet industry have come together to offer you the ultimate guide to supporting your dog with allergies.

Let's meet The Allergy Avengers!



CanineCeuticals

[This is my brand.](#) We fuse ancient traditional medicine with the latest scientific evidence to create the most effective health solutions for your pet. We provide personalised consultations and solutions for a host of challenges your pet may face, including supplements to support your dog's immune system, skin and gut health when suffering from allergies.

Lara Shannon

As a certified dog trainer, pet behaviourist and pet food nutrition specialist, [Lara Shannon](#) is one of Australia's most well-known animal welfare advocates and canine experts. She is the executive producer and host of Channel 10's *Pooches at Play* and *The Dog Down Under*, editor of [Poochesatplay.com](#) and executive producer and Host of *Animal SOS Australia*. Author of *World of Dogs* and *Eat, Play, Love (Your Dog)*, Lara is determined to help dog owners provide their dogs with the healthiest, happiest life possible.



Vetz Petz

The experts at [Vetz Petz](#) know all there is to know about inflammation and skin health. Their ground-breaking supplement, Antinol Plus, is scientifically proven to reduce inflammation and support skin health. Not only that, but it also supports your dog's joint and brain health too. Vetz Petz's vision is to keep happiness in motion, making everyday moments better for longer through small, consistent actions that change the world for people and pets of all shapes and sizes.



Big Dog Pet Foods

[Big Dog Pet Foods](#) is Australia's leading healthy pet nutrition provider and has been keeping pets happy and healthy since 2000. Their mission is to create the healthiest natural food that pets were born to eat and thrive on. Raw, healthy food has an incredible impact on dog skin and response to allergies whilst also addressing gut health issues. To Big Dog Pet Foods, pets are family and deserve real food that makes them happy and keeps them healthy.

Dr Nicole Rous – Shy Tiger

Dr Nicole Rous is an integrative veterinarian deeply committed to natural health practices. Dr Nicole also owns and operates [Mont Albert Veterinary Surgery](#) in Melbourne, Australia, whilst formulating her [Shy Tiger](#) range of natural, effective healthcare products. Dr Nicole is dedicated to the education of pet parents and provides a suite of free educational materials to help owners feel confident in the care of their pets.



LickiMat

The first [LickiMat](#) was originally designed to improve dogs' oral hygiene. Today they produce over 36 different options of mats and feeders, designed to distract, entertain, calm and slow your dog's feeding. Loved by dogs and cats across the globe, LickiMats are used by behaviourists, trainers and vets to provide stimulation and enrichment to support dogs' emotional and mental wellbeing.

We'll all be popping up throughout the book with expert advice, hints and tips to keep your dog happy, healthy and comfortable this spring.

Common Allergy Symptoms in Dogs

Behavioural changes such as increased restlessness or irritability due to discomfort

Signs of ear infections, such as head shaking, scratching or bad odour

Hives, skin bumps, excessive shedding or fur loss in patches

Gastrointestinal issues like vomiting or diarrhoea

Lethargy or decreased activity level due to discomfort or feeling unwell

Runny eyes or eye discharge

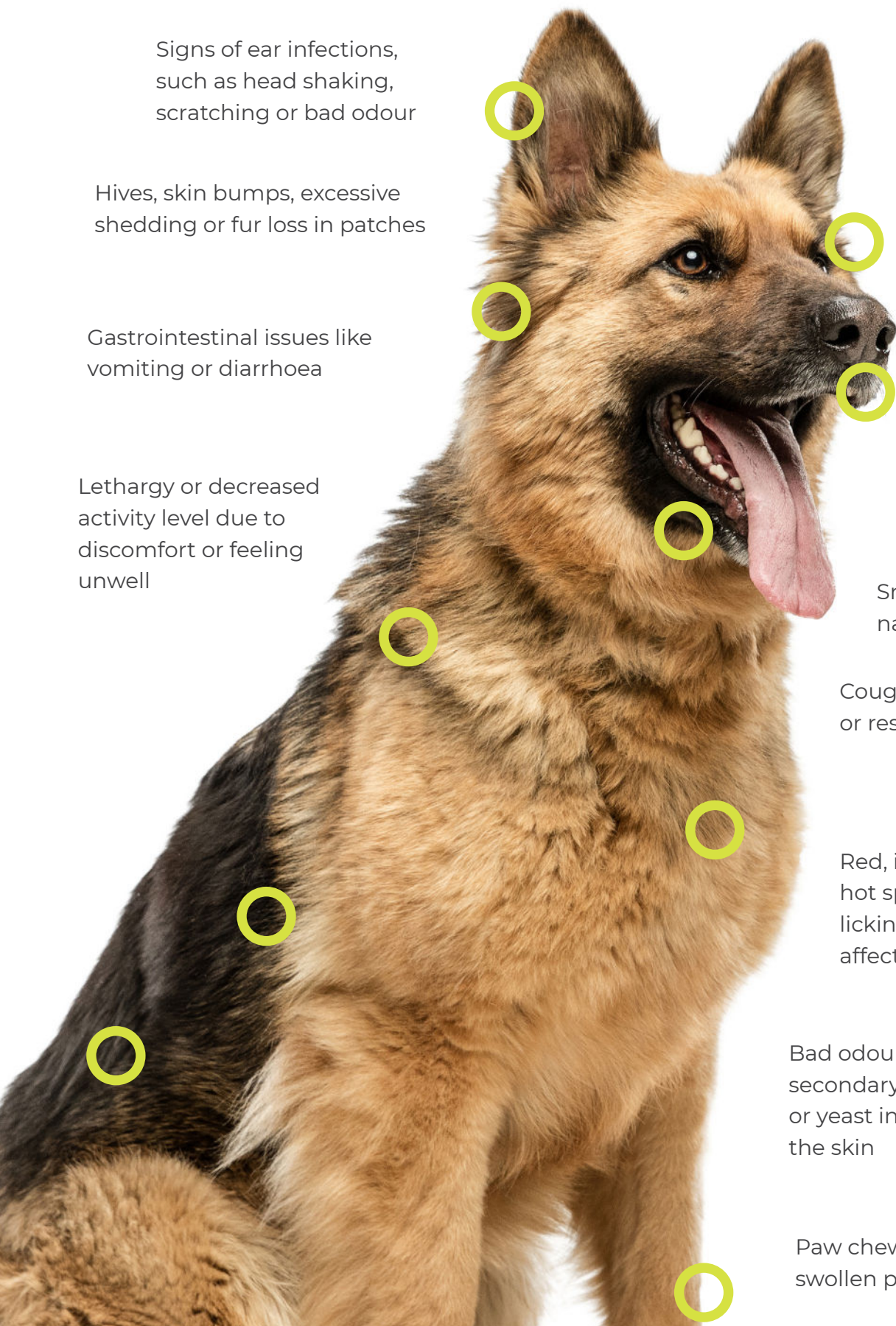
Sneezing or nasal discharge

Coughing, wheezing or respiratory issues

Red, inflamed skin or hot spots, scratching, licking, or biting at affected areas

Bad odour due to secondary bacterial or yeast infections on the skin

Paw chewing or swollen paws



Common Types of Allergy

Food Allergies

With food allergies in humans being reported at an all-time high, many pet owners are becoming increasingly concerned about food allergies in their pets. But as it turns out, food allergies are not as common as we think. Data analysed from over 2.5 million dogs and 500,000 cats found that true food allergies affect just 0.2% of dogs and 0.1% of cats. So while food allergies are one possible cause for your dog's recurrent ear infections and itchy skin, there are many other causes that may have nothing to do with the food they're eating. In pets, a food allergy occurs when the immune system mistakenly identifies a specific protein found in food as a harmful substance. The body then produces antibodies to fight it, causing allergic symptoms such as itching, hives, and sometimes even anaphylaxis. Unlike food intolerance, food allergies often trigger systemic symptoms that may affect the skin, gastrointestinal tract, and respiratory system. Diagnosis usually involves an elimination diet, where suspected allergens are removed from the pet's meals for a specific period, then reintroduced one at a time to identify the culprit. In dogs, food allergies are more commonly associated with chicken, beef, dairy, soy, and wheat.

Environmental Allergies

Also known as atopic dermatitis, environmental allergies rank among the most prevalent skin diseases in dogs and are triggered by external factors such as pollen, grasses, dust mites, and mould spores. Of all dogs, 20% to 30% present with some type of allergic dermatitis. Dogs can come into contact with the environmental substance through either inhalation (via the mouth or nose) or direct contact (via the skin). In most cases of atopic dermatitis, the microscopic allergens penetrate directly through the skin. As such, environmental allergies commonly lead to symptoms such as skin irritation and itching, as well as respiratory issues like sneezing and coughing. Dogs may scratch, bite, or lick themselves excessively to relieve the discomfort, potentially leading to secondary skin infections.

Some of these allergies are seasonal, appearing only at specific times of the year, which can make them somewhat easier to pinpoint based on when the symptoms manifest. A range of treatment options exists for managing these environmental allergies, from antihistamines that reduce allergic reactions to specialised shampoos that soothe irritated skin. In more severe cases, immunotherapy might be recommended to help the dog's immune system become less reactive to the allergens over time.

Flea Allergies

Flea allergy dermatitis, also known as 'flea bite hypersensitivity', is the most prevalent allergic condition in dogs. This allergic reaction to flea saliva can be triggered by even a single flea bite and results in intense itching, redness, and inflammation. Affected dogs may bite and scratch the irritated areas, sometimes leading to skin infections. Effective management involves stringent flea control measures, both on your dog and in their living environment. Your veterinarian may recommend oral or topical flea preventatives, as well as corticosteroids or antihistamines to control the itching.



Factors that Increase the Risk of Allergy

The gastrointestinal tract's lining is the largest bodily surface that interacts directly with the external environment. When the integrity of this gut barrier is compromised – a condition often termed 'leaky gut syndrome' (or 'leaky gut' or sometimes 'gastrointestinal hyperpermeability') – undigested food proteins and other foreign substances can more easily enter the bloodstream. This triggers an immune response, setting the stage for the development of food allergies. Unfortunately, several common dietary and lifestyle factors can contribute to this leaky gut condition, thereby increasing the likelihood of food allergies.

Here are some key culprits:

Dietary Risks

High-carbohydrate diets

Many commercial dog foods are rich in carbohydrates, sometimes constituting up to 60% of the content. When proteins are heated at high temperatures alongside these carbohydrates, it can result in the formation of protein aggregates. These aggregates are not easily digestible and enhance the food's allergenic potential.

Artificial additives:

Ingredients used in the manufacturing of commercial pet foods, such as food colourings and preservatives, are often overlooked but can be hidden allergens. Dogs consuming standard commercial kibble or canned food are quite likely exposed to these additives regularly.

Storage mites:

Storage mites can be found in dry pet food. Pets exposed to this mite through ingestion, inhalation or absorption through the skin may develop an allergy to it.



High Carb Diets



Artificial Additives



Storage Mites



Processed Kibbles



Contamination + Mislabelling

Processed kibbles (dry dog food):

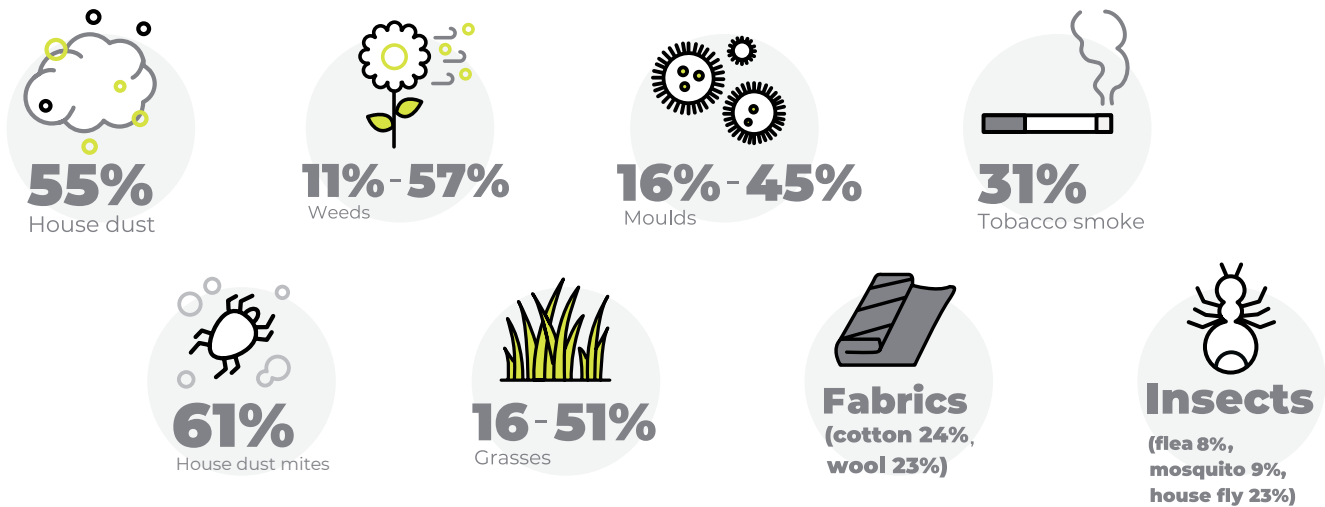
The extrusion process that commercial kibbles undergo triggers the Maillard reaction. This leads to the formation of advanced glycation end products and other harmful compounds that can induce a pro-inflammatory response, increasing the risk of allergic reactions.

Food contamination and mislabelling:

Unfortunately, the issue of mislabelling and contamination is not uncommon in the pet food industry, even in veterinary prescription foods designed for elimination diets. One study found that 12.5% of hydrolysed protein diets for dogs and cats did not contain the animal species declared on the label, and a staggering 58% contained undeclared animal species.

Lifestyle Risks

When it comes to environmental allergens that commonly affect dogs, one research study identified the following as the most likely triggers:



Common environmental allergens affecting dogs

Other lifestyle factors can adversely affect gut health, potentially increasing the risk of allergies in dogs. These include:

Acid-Lowering Medications: Medications designed to reduce stomach acidity can disrupt the breakdown of large food proteins. This alteration in digestion can consequently raise the risk of developing food allergies.

Anti-Inflammatory Medications: Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are among the leading contributors to gut lining damage. The compromised gut lining is known to be a factor in the onset of food allergies.

Antibiotics: Overuse or improper use of antibiotics can deplete the diversity of the gut microbiome, facilitating the emergence of allergic conditions.

Various household chemicals and products can play a role in triggering or exacerbating skin conditions in dogs. Here are some key considerations:

Cleaning Agents and Detergents: Residual chemicals from cleaning products or laundry detergents can linger on pet bedding, leading to skin irritation. Opt for hypoallergenic or pet-safe alternatives when possible.

Outdoor Chemicals: Pesticides, fertilisers, and insecticides used in gardens or around the home can be harmful. Ensure your pet avoids treated areas until it's safe, and consider pet-friendly options.

Essential Oils: While some essential oils offer health benefits, oils like tea tree and eucalyptus can be toxic to dogs and may cause skin irritation. Always consult your vet before using essential oils around your pet.

Plastic Pet Supplies: Plastic bowls and toys may leach chemicals that act as endocrine disruptors, which could worsen skin conditions. Opt for stainless steel or ceramic bowls and natural toy materials when possible.

Aerosol Products: Common aerosolised products like insect sprays, perfumes, hairsprays, and air fresheners often contain irritants. Use these sparingly and ensure good ventilation when applied.

Water Quality: Chlorinated or fluoridated water can be harsh on a dog's skin. Consider using filtered water for your pet's drinking and bathing needs.

Pet Grooming Products: Not all shampoos, soaps, and medicated skin treatments are suitable for every dog. Look for hypoallergenic products.



We also mustn't overlook the impact that stress and anxiety can have on a dog's health. Elevated levels of stress can negatively affect both gut health and immune system functioning in dogs. This compromised state can make them more vulnerable to a range of issues, including gastrointestinal disturbances and skin-related problems such as allergies or infections. Therefore, managing your dog's emotional wellbeing is another integral aspect of keeping them healthy, particularly if they are already prone to allergic reactions.

Being aware of these risk factors can help you make more informed dietary choices for your dog, reducing the likelihood of triggering or exacerbating food allergies.

What's the Problem in Spring?

Think of it like hay fever in humans. Your dog may be managing their allergy symptoms perfectly well throughout the autumn and winter, but when spring comes, they're itching, scratching, and licking themselves raw.

There are a few factors that exacerbate allergies in springtime, as there are more potential irritants in your dog's environment. Tree pollen, grass pollen, flowers, and dust thrown up from cleaning or harvesting. All of these things can potentially cause allergic reactions in your dog, making them itchy and uncomfortable. Plus, the increased temperatures mean parasite numbers rise rapidly, leading to a potential increase in flea allergies.

The Australian Pollen Calendar

Knowing when various pollen is active in the environment will help you understand when your dog might be finding things more difficult. This varies across Australia month by month. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy has an annual calendar that shows what is active when and where. It could be handy to know for your dog and even for you if you have hay fever.

Find the pollen calendar here

You can also check the pollen count in your area on a daily basis at <https://www.pollenforecast.com.au/>

When Should You Call the Vet?

Although we are offering advice on a holistic approach to managing your dog's skin conditions or allergies, it is also vitally important that you consult with your vet.

Allergies can become serious medical emergencies that may require rapid intervention, although this is not usually the case. Most cases aren't medical emergencies, and your vet will hopefully advise you to take a holistic approach to supporting your dog. However, skin conditions can rapidly get worse if not treated, so speaking with your vet sooner rather than later is best for your dog.

You should speak to your vet if:

- Your dog begins itching and scratching more than usual.
- You notice excessive licking or grooming.
- The skin becomes red or sore-looking.
- Bald patches or excessive shedding occur.
- Your dog begins to vomit or have diarrhoea.
- They have weepy eyes or excessive tear staining.

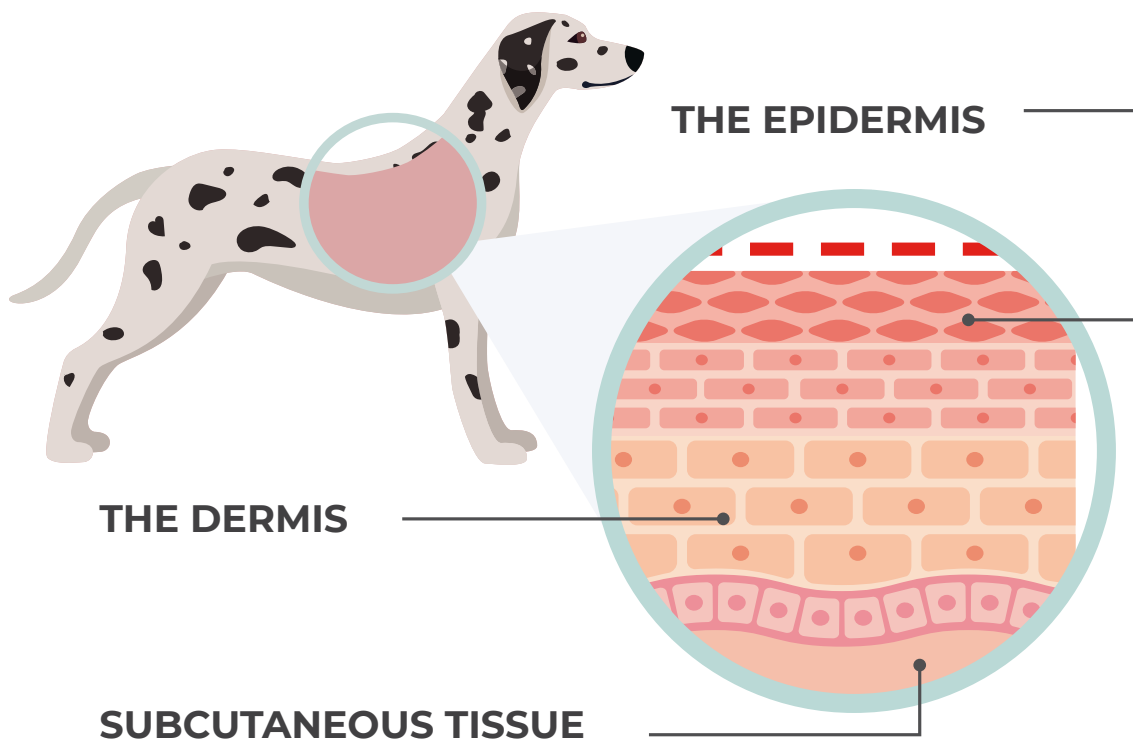
Of course, if you are worried about your dog's health, we always recommend that you speak to your vet. Your vet may decide that your dog requires intervention with medication, either internally or topically, and you should be guided by your vet on this. However, this may not be an appropriate long-term solution, so looking at other changes you can make to your dog's diet and lifestyle is important in the long run.

The Skin and Allergies

By Dr Nicole and the Vetz Petz Team

The skin is a complex organ with multiple layers, each playing a vital role in overall health. The outermost layer, the epidermis, acts as a protective barrier against environmental aggressors. Beneath it lies the dermis, where essential nutrients are delivered, and collagen and elastin provide structure and elasticity. The hypodermis (sometimes called the subcutis) is the deepest layer, containing fat and connective tissue, helping to cushion and insulate the body.

The skin's microbiome, a community of microorganisms living on the surface, is crucial for maintaining skin health. It acts as a natural defence, supporting the skin's immune responses and preventing harmful bacteria from taking hold. Traditional antiseptic shampoos often used in allergy management can strip this microbiome, much like how antibiotics can disrupt the gut microbiome, leading to issues like 'leaky skin' – where the skin barrier is compromised, similar to leaky gut syndrome in the digestive system.



Skin layers



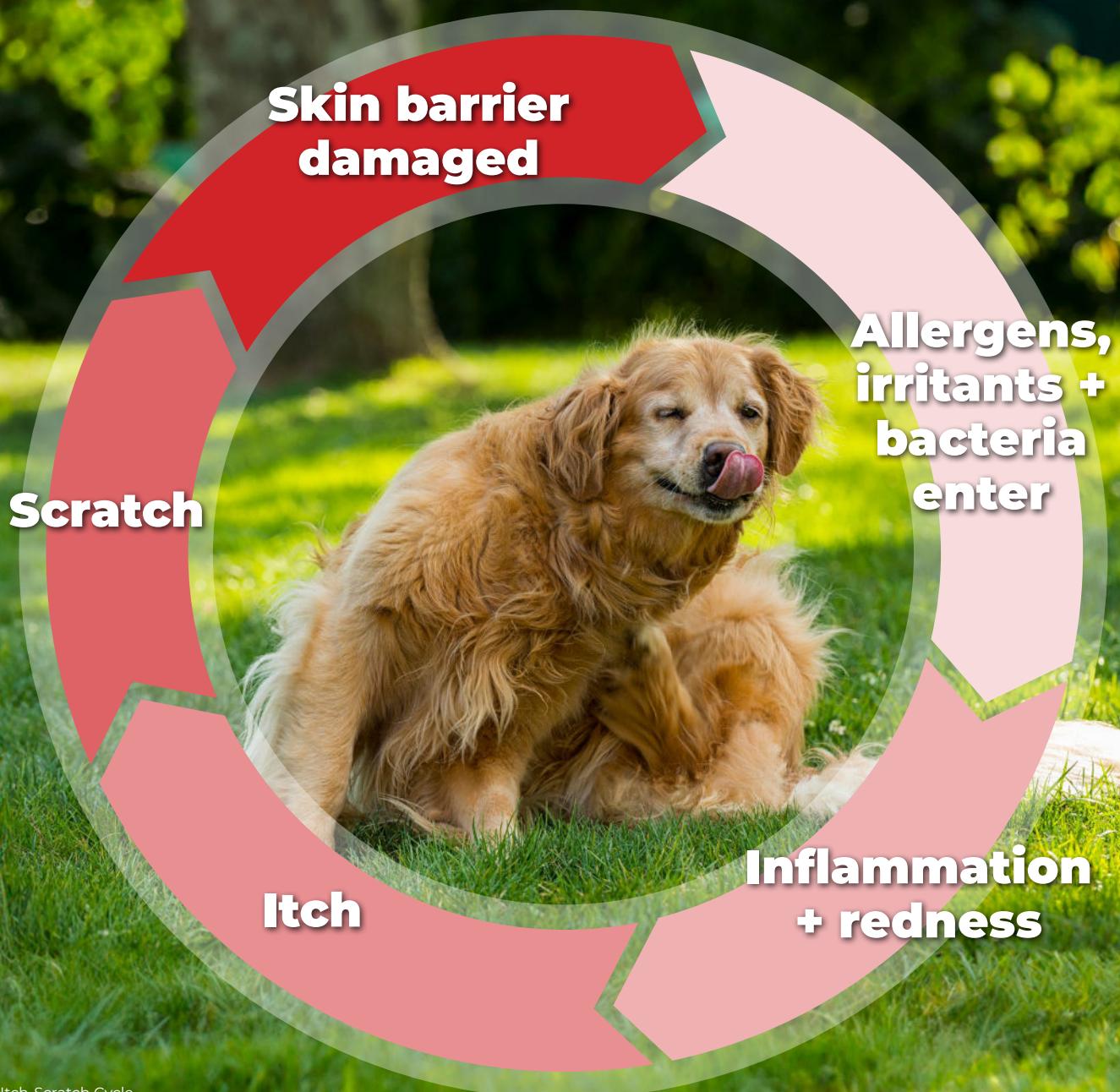
Dr Nicole uses Shy Tiger's 'Protect' as a natural antiseptic to help cleanse the skin without disturbing this delicate balance. She follows up with a nourishing plant-based balm to restore and support the skin's natural barrier, reinforcing the epidermis and maintaining the integrity of the deeper layers. This is a favourite regime, especially through the allergy months with those paw lickers!

Allergic Skin Disease

Normal skin cells are like a wall. The cells are tightly packed together like bricks, with strong mortar between them. Skin with seasonal skin disease is more like a dry stone wall. The cells aren't so tightly packed together, and the cement isn't strong. Water is able to pass out of the skin; it's dry and crumbly, but it also allows allergens through from the outside, resulting in immune responses.

Your dog's itch-scratch cycle

The problem with skin disease is that it's a self-perpetuating cycle. Itching damages the skin, which causes inflammation and infection, making your dog scratch more, which causes more inflammation. To improve your dog's condition, we need to break this cycle while supporting their skin and gut health from within. There are many facets to allergies and, as we mentioned before, supporting your dog is a very holistic process. You will likely need to make multiple adaptations to their nutrition and lifestyle for the best health outcome.



The Role of Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Allergies and Skin Health

By the Vetz Petz Team

Fatty acids and the skin

Fatty acids are necessary for your dog's body to function normally. Non-essential fatty acids can be made within the body, while essential fatty acids can't, so need to be included in your dog's diet.

There are two types of essential fatty acids which you may have heard of – Omega 3 and omega 6. Both are necessary for the body to function correctly and are particularly important in the dermal and epidermal layers of the skin. These layers require essential fatty acids to provide structural and nutritional support, and if dietary levels are too low, it can result in increased skin permeability. This means your dog's skin is more likely to react to external allergens, particularly in springtime. It also means water is lost from the skin, resulting in dry, flaky, and potentially sore skin.

Inflammation and skin health

Skin inflammation can occur due to a whole host of reasons and will often result in red sore patches or discoloured fur from over – grooming. Commonly, external irritants, allergens or infections cause inflammation, and although we associate it mostly with reddened, angry-looking skin, it can also present as dry and flaky.

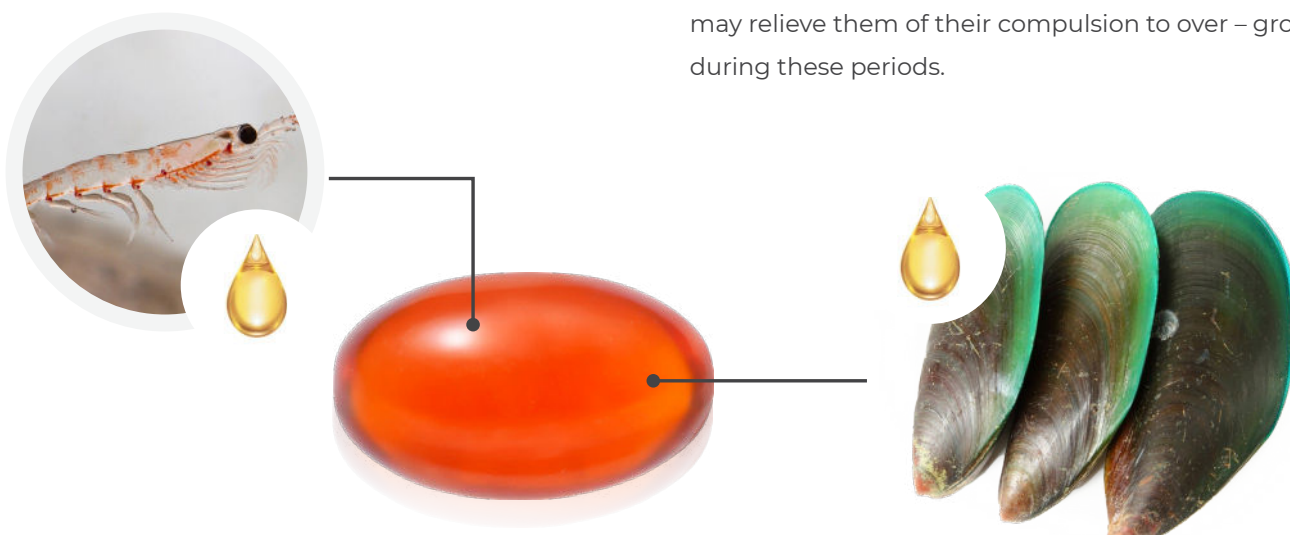
Within the skin are a special type of cell called mast cells. These cells are very important in a dog's immune system and protection against the outside world.

When triggered, they release histamine and heparin, among other substances. They are known as 'pro-inflammatory mediators'. This means that when triggered, they cause inflammation, recruiting other cells from the immune system to tackle an issue from the outside (such as an infection or allergy).

They usually act to benefit the animal, protect it, or help with the healing process. However, they can be overactive or respond in sensitivity to a common substance in the outside world (for example, a sensitivity to grass and pollen in the spring).

The skin's mast cells are activated by stress, whether psychological or physical, in response to an irritant. They then produce stress hormones and pro-inflammatory factors. This leads to a cycle of stress-induced inflammatory events and causes your dog to begin to itch, scratch, and lick themselves, causing further inflammation and irritation.

Breaking or reducing this cycle of inflammation will help dogs' skin to feel more comfortable and, in turn, may relieve them of their compulsion to over – groom during these periods.



How does Antinol Plus support skin health?

Antinol Plus's main function in the skin is to support the normal inflammatory responses of the body and healthy skin function. As we discussed earlier, the skin requires essential and non-essential fatty acids to function normally. Antinol Plus contains over 90 different fatty acids, all of which play an important role in a dog's health and wellbeing, including a range of compounds which have been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties. They are known as LOX and COX modulators. COX pro-inflammatory pathways (ways in which inflammation occurs) are involved in many inflammatory skin conditions, and Antinol Plus interrupts these pathways to decrease inflammation and soothe skin.



Antinol Plus and skin allergy medication

You may not have considered medication for your dog's skin condition yet, and we would always recommend consulting with your vet. Medications absolutely have their place in this multifaceted approach to managing allergies. However, one of the problems with certain medications for skin conditions is that keeping your dog on a high dose for long periods of time isn't appropriate, thanks to some unpleasant side effects. However, as you taper or reduce reliance on these medications, your dog is likely to experience a flare-up, or 'rebound', and you will see an increase in their uncomfortable skin symptoms. Antinol Plus can help here. If you're ready to reduce your dog's reliance on medication, studies have shown that Antinol Plus can reduce the likelihood of rebound symptoms, enabling you to reduce your dog's medication dosage without the uncomfortable side effects.

SKIN ALLERGY AVENGERS

TOP TIP!



Photo provided by Bridget Martin

If you're applying creams or anything topical to your dog and you need them to leave the application site alone for a while, try giving them a [LickiMat](#) loaded with their favourite (skin-friendly) treats. It keeps them distracted for long enough for the products to soak in, or gives you time to apply a product while they are busy!

Keep Calm and Carry On – The role of stress in skin health

By Lara Shannon, The Vetz Petz Team, and Narelle Cooke

Anxiety is VERY common in our beloved dogs, yet many people miss the signs of anxiety and truly don't [understand why or how it occurs](#). In fact, according to a recent large-scale study, up to 70% of dogs are showing signs of anxiety.

Anxiety happens when your dog experiences fearful thoughts and feelings which then trigger or cause a state of physiological arousal – in which adrenaline levels increase. Your dog's fear response can be triggered by a broad range of different stimuli – including sounds, smells, situations, other people or other animals or dogs.

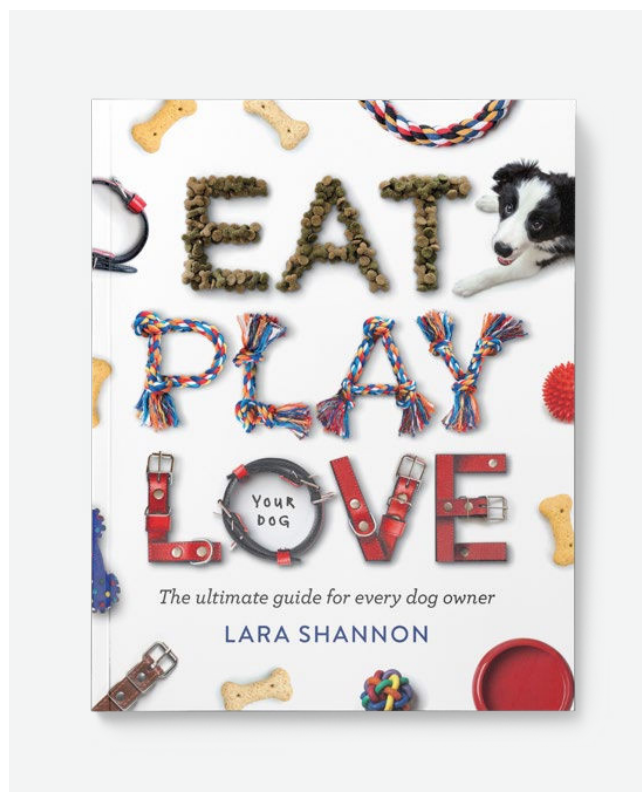
Stress and atopic dermatitis

If your dog is suffering with their skin, it is important to consider if they are also struggling with anxiety. A recent study has shown that [dogs with atopic dermatitis are more likely to exhibit stress-related behaviours](#) than those dogs with healthy skin. And further studies link [decreased trainability and fear and anxiety-related symptoms, including aggression, with atopic dermatitis](#).

Stress and anxiety are closely connected with skin issues in our worried dogs, creating a cycle where each problem can trigger and worsen the other. For instance, stress increases the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which heightens the inflammatory response and can aggravate existing skin conditions. The itchy discomfort from these conditions then causes more stress, leading to compulsive behaviours like licking, chewing, and scratching.

These behaviours can become self-rewarding and evolve into obsessive self-soothing actions that harm both your dog's skin and their mental wellbeing. Overgrooming can lead to serious skin damage, perpetuating the stress-skin issue cycle. To help your dog, it's important to recognise the signs of stress and manage their anxiety, providing relief from their worries and distractions from self-harming behaviours. By doing so, you can help them feel more confident, happy, and less likely to engage in compulsive actions that worsen their condition.

If you are concerned about your dog's behaviour we would always recommend getting in contact with both your vet, and a qualified behaviourist like Lara Shannon for support. For general advice on keeping your dog happy and healthy, we recommend her book *Eat, Play, Love (Your Dog)*.



Spot the Signs of Stress in Your Dog

There are fairly consistent changes in body language or non-verbal communication in dogs who are experiencing anxiety. This is what to look out for:

Piloerection – with the hair along the back standing up

Excessive seeking of attention and soothing from their humans

Constant hypervigilance, with your dog never relaxing, and hyperreactive even to small stimuli

An appearance of 'smiling' – with the corners of the lips pulled back towards the ears

Ears pinning back, with a lot of tension

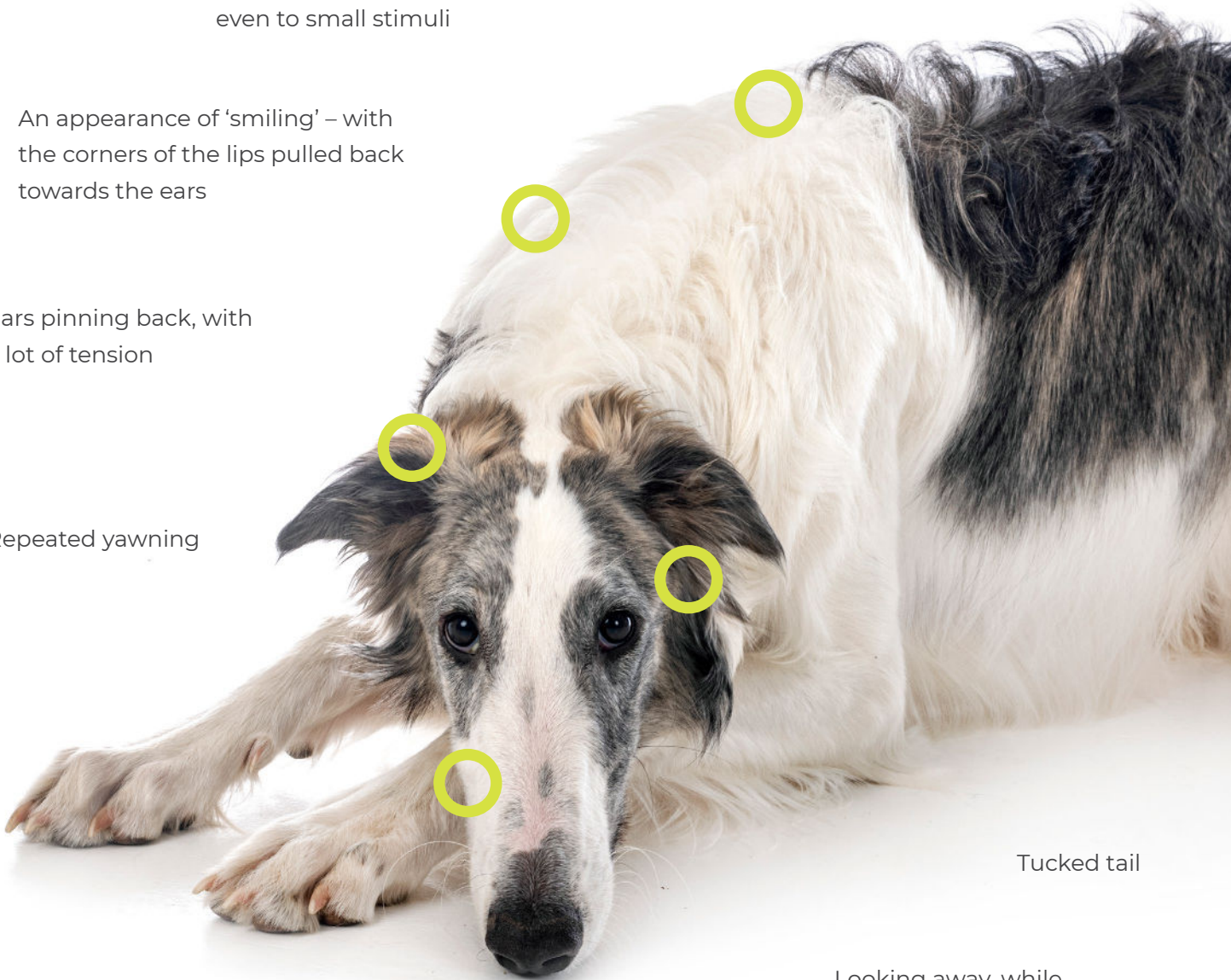
Repeated yawning

Tucked tail

Excessive licking of the lips and chops. You'll see a large amount of tongue sweeping-around with this behaviour

Whale eye – your dog showing more of the whites of the eye

Looking away, while holding one paw up



The Four Faces of Anxiety in Dogs (and why two are easy to miss!)

There are four faces or expressions of anxiety in dogs. You need to know what all of them look like so you'll be sure to pick up any anxiety issues in your dogs as early as possible. Two of these you'll probably know about, and at least one most people are surprised to learn is actually anxious behaviour.



Fight

The first face of anxiety is Fight. The fight face is easy to see – these dogs are **reactive, lunging, barking**, escalating to attacking and biting whoever or whatever thing they are afraid of. These dogs are trying to make the scary thing go away, by actively attacking it. It's very easy to see. And dangerous for the dog and others!



Flight

The second face of anxiety is also easy to see – Flight. These dogs are trying to get away from the scary thing. In the vet clinic, they might be hiding under chairs. In a thunderstorm, they might be jumping the fence and going into a blind bolt. They might dig or chew their way out of the house, escape, or hide under beds or in cupboards.



Freeze

The third face is harder to spot. This is the Freeze. These dogs can go totally still and silent, or they may have a partial freeze, which means that they'll be shut down to some extent. This one is easier to miss. Many people misinterpret this stillness as a dog who is relaxed and okay. However, if you observe closely you'll notice that there is a tension in the stillness. This is not a happy dog. The dog will often be less responsive or unresponsive to communication when they are in a freeze.



Fidget

The fourth face of anxiety in dogs is the one that is very commonly misunderstood, misinterpreted, and missed. This is the Fidget. These dogs get into heightened states of arousal and become over-excited. Not only that, they often stop responding to commands from their humans. This is the classic dog who, when people come to visit, is out of control, jumping all over everyone, non-responsive to commands, and a total pork chop! The higher the level of unhealthy arousal, the less cognitive capacity an anxious dog has. By the time they cross their arousal 'red line', your anxious dog literally cannot understand or respond to your communication. Many people think that the fidget face of anxiety in dogs is a happy, playful dog. In reality, this is a distressed, anxious dog who is uncomfortable, unable to regulate into healthy relaxation, and in need of help from you, the human.

Ways to Manage Stress and Anxiety in Your Dog

It's vital to [address any behaviour problems as soon as possible](#) and seek out the support of your vet or a qualified dog trainer when dealing with anxiety in dogs. Managing anxiety in your dog means you really need to get to know them, what worries them, what calms them, and what interests them. Once you understand what is going on in their head, you can tap into a plethora of ways to support them and help them feel calmer and more relaxed. So what can you do to help them?

Work with a behaviourist

For very mild cases of anxiety, or when medication has been prescribed, behaviour modification using [positive reinforcement training](#) can help build your dog's confidence. A qualified behaviourist can guide you through this first step, helping you understand why your dog is behaving the way they do. Together, you can develop a support plan and determine the actions needed to help your dog overcome potentially destructive behaviours.

Use calming products

Dr. Nicole recommends using aromatherapy sprays, like [Shy Tiger's Soothe + Calm aromatherapy products](#), as a quick way to manage stress in dogs, especially those with allergic skin disease. These sprays work by influencing the brain's GABA receptors, which help calm the nervous system and reduce the fight-or-flight response. Wearing a [ThunderShirt](#) can provide additional support during stressful events, or during illness.



Recommendation #1

Calming sprays and serums from Shy Tiger

Discover the ultimate sanctuary of tranquillity for your beloved dog with the Emotional Support Kit, meticulously crafted by Dr Nicole and the Shy Tiger team. Infused with the therapeutic essences of 100% natural essential oils, this comprehensive kit is designed to envelop both your pet and your home in a calm, serene atmosphere.

This gorgeous calming kit contains the [Soothe + Calm Stress](#) diffuser oils for both night-time worries and daytime stresses. It also includes a daytime stress spray for on-the-go relief, and a night-time serum for peaceful sleep.



All of the products contain carefully selected blends of ingredients to support your dog's mental and emotional wellbeing. Lavender is a key ingredient in these products and has been extensively researched for its calming effects. Beyond reducing stress, lavender also has soothing properties for irritated skin, making it a valuable part of a holistic approach to stress and skin health.

Create a safe, calm space

Always promote calmness in your dog. A quiet spot where your dog feels calm and safe is vital to help them come down from their heightened anxious state. Ensure they get enough sleep, and when they are lying around peacefully or are enjoying some time out with a long-lasting chew, quietly whisper “Good dog” to help reinforce that desired behaviour, but make sure you don’t interrupt them. Many pet parents use a crate with a comfy bed and a sheet covering three sides, creating a cosy den that dogs can retreat to when things get too much. You could even play quiet, calming music. Most streaming services will have curated playlists of music suitable for dogs.

Avoid triggers where possible

Understanding what triggers your dog’s anxiety is a great first step. The next step is to avoid these triggers as much as possible. We want to prevent anxious dogs from repeatedly experiencing situations that cause their anxiety, as this can reinforce the unwanted behaviour.

For example, if your dog feels nervous around other dogs, it’s best to avoid places like [dog parks](#) – your dog doesn’t need to be there. If they’re uncomfortable around children or strangers, ask people to avoid reaching out or patting your dog. Instead, calmly remove your dog from these situations or politely ask others to ignore your dog.

By minimising exposure to these triggers, you can help keep your dog calm. However, if these triggers are unavoidable, understanding why they upset your dog allows you to find solutions to make them more manageable. A behaviourist can be especially helpful in guiding you through this process.

Provide enrichment and distraction

Providing [environmental enrichment](#) – that’s things like interactive toys, and exercises that keep their brains and bodies – active can be extremely helpful. We know that being distracted by something we enjoy takes our mind off our worries, and it’s no different for your dog. For example, play with them during a thunderstorm so that they are thinking more about having fun with you, than the noise outside. Give them an appropriate chew toy instead of them using your table leg.

Medication

Many owners can be hesitant to consider medication for anxious dogs; however, for many dogs with higher levels of [anxiety disorders](#), training alone or natural alternatives may not be sufficient. Medications for [anxious dogs](#) that are most frequently used include fluoxetine, commonly known as Prozac, and also clomipramine. These increase the levels of chemicals in the brain that are responsible for promoting feelings of calmness and wellbeing.

In some cases, where certain triggers or situations set off the anxiety, short-acting medications that take between 30 and 90 minutes to work (such as clonidine and trazodone), are prescribed. Do speak to your vet if current methods are not working.





SKIN ALLERGY AVENGERS

Recommendation #2

Keep them busy with LickiMat

LickiMats, made from natural human-grade rubber and TPR (thermoplastic rubber), are designed to improve your dog's mental health. They are based on a challenge/reward treat delivery system that engages dogs over a long period of time by delivering small portions of their favourite treat or food.

The extended licking action required to remove the delicious food from the mat promotes the release of calming hormones for your dog. They can provide enough distraction to break the cycle of obsessive self-grooming, meaning your dog stops licking and chewing their own skin, and focuses on the high-value treats in the mat. You can even freeze them to increase the time your dog is focusing.

This calming licking action increases saliva, for a cleaner mouth, teeth and gums, and can even aid digestion as the increased saliva means more digestive amylase enzymes. LickiMats are tough for chewers, and are dishwasher safe, making them easy to clean.

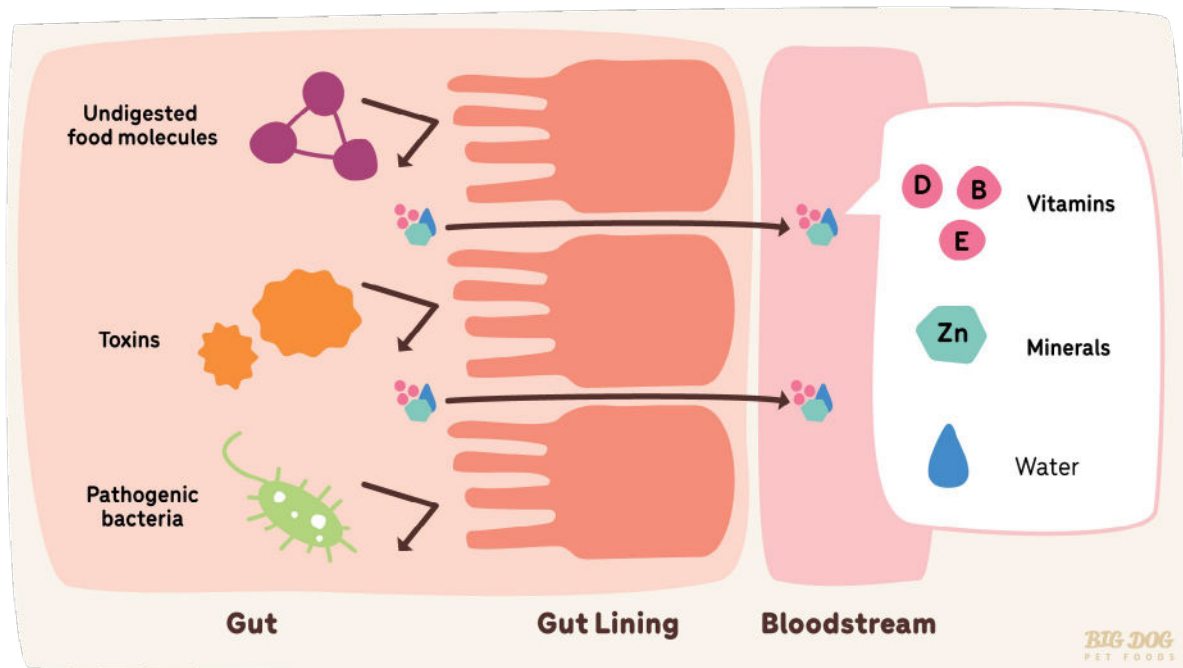
LickiMats are increasingly used by vets, pet trainers and animal behaviourists in their training efforts. In fact, all our Allergy Avengers use them in one way or another to support dog emotional and mental wellbeing. You can buy them directly from [LickiMat](#), or via our behaviourist [Lara Shannon](#).



The Importance of Gut Health

Allergies and a Leaky Gut

By Big Dog Pet Foods and Narelle Cooke



Leaky Gut

What Is leaky gut?

The term 'leaky gut' is used to describe the more formal condition of 'gastrointestinal hyperpermeability', which basically means that the lining of the gastrointestinal tract has become more porous than it should be.

An easy way to visualise the concept of 'leaky gut' is to image the gut lining as a very fine, single-layered cheesecloth that is designed to let nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and water into the bloodstream and keep larger, undigested food molecules, toxins, and pathogenic bacteria out. But when this very delicate layer is damaged – by poor diet, for example, and becomes more 'leaky' – it is then unable to prevent undigested food particles and potentially toxic organisms from passing through into your dog's bloodstream, where they absolutely don't belong and are considered by the body as foreign invaders.

Once this occurs, a cascade of inflammatory processes are triggered, the immune system becomes over-stimulated, and our dogs become

much more susceptible to both environmental and food allergens, along with a whole raft of other potential health problems.

For example, while digestive issues and skin conditions are generally the most common symptoms that you'll see in dogs with leaky gut, it can also manifest as chronic ear infections, joint diseases, autoimmune disorders and even behavioural problems.

It is well established that increased intestinal permeability in humans is associated with conditions such as coeliac disease, type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, autism, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome, liver disease and major depressive disorder. Research also shows that ameliorating leaky gut tends to reduce clinical signs and symptoms associated with disease, whereas inducing leaky gut has been shown to increase disease severity in both humans and animals.

How does it occur?

There are many factors that can cause the mucosal lining of the gut to become more permeable (leaky). The overuse of antibiotics in both dogs and humans is a big one. But what's probably more relevant to dog owners on a day-to-day basis is the type of food they choose to feed.

If we consider our own situation, there is a lot of emerging evidence that the standard Australian diet, which is low in fibre and high in sugar, may initiate this process – which is similar to what dogs are getting when they consume highly processed commercial kibbles. Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- Many commercial kibbles contain a long list of synthetic preservatives, additives and colours, each of which can trigger inflammation of the gut lining.
 - Commercial pet foods are cooked at very high temperatures, destroying beneficial living organisms and enzymes, and thereby compromising digestion.
- The way commercial foods are processed creates a particular reaction between the proteins and the sugars (called the Maillard reaction). This reaction has been shown to contribute to chronic inflammatory states in the gut with subsequent negative health consequences.
- Many commercial kibbles and canned foods contain high levels of biologically inappropriate carbohydrates that our dogs are not naturally

designed to eat and digest. These carbohydrates ultimately break down into simple sugar molecules in the body, feeding yeast and other harmful bacteria and contributing towards leaky gut.

Tips to prevent and heal leaky gut

The most important thing that we can do to prevent or heal a leaky gut – whether it's for our dogs or ourselves, is to eat a more species-appropriate, wholefood diet. For our dogs, this means less of those ultra-processed foods that are high in sugars and synthetic additives, and increasing the amount of:

- Higher quality, more bioavailable animal proteins.
- High quality fats such as the anti-inflammatory Omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish (i.e. salmon, sardines, and mackerel), eggs, flaxseeds, hemp seeds and chia seeds. When a dog's diet is deficient in Omega-3 (or if there is too much Omega-6 relative to Omega-3), the immune system will react in a more inflammatory way, release more histamine, and increase your dog's allergic tendency.
- Fresh vegetables and fruits, particularly seasonal if you can get them. Studies have shown that adding some fresh vegetables to your dog's diet multiple times a week significantly reduces the incidence of certain cancers.
- Pre- and probiotics to strengthen the integrity of the gut, support immune function and promote overall health and wellbeing.



Click on the video to start playing



How Raw Food Can Help with Allergies

The beauty of feeding more species-appropriate raw foods – particularly when addressing skin and allergy problems – is that they are working from the inside out to get our dogs back to their optimal state of health as quickly and naturally as possible.

Unlike the majority of commercial kibbles, most raw food companies don't need to add anything artificial or synthetic to their foods. This means that our dogs are going to have healthier, less 'leaky' guts, stronger immune systems and ultimately be less prone to developing allergies and skin issues in the first place.

But if your dog is currently suffering from a skin or digestive issue and you suspect that it may be due to food intolerances, the best approach is to feed a diet that has a low allergenic potential. Reducing the allergenic load, and minimising the number of potential triggers, means that you are much better placed to figure out what might be causing the problem. It also gives your dog's gut the time it needs to heal and function normally again.

In these instances, our key recommendation to pet owners is to purchase a commercial raw food formula that contains the meat, offal and bone of a single animal species (i.e. just kangaroo, just turkey or just goat), in combination with other low-reactive wholefoods to support gut health and healing.

Goat is a particularly good starting point for pet owners because, for most dogs, goat acts as a novel protein (i.e. an animal protein that your dog hasn't eaten before). The benefit of novel proteins is that they work to give your dog's immune system a break and a chance to calm down. [Turkey](#) and [kangaroo](#) are also highly effective in these situations due to their much lower allergenic potential compared to the more commonly fed protein sources of chicken and beef.

A final consideration when it comes to skin issues, in addition to feeding foods that reduce inflammation, is to also add in ingredients that improve your dog's quality of life by reducing their itching and supporting the integrity of the skin barrier in order to minimise the occurrence of secondary infections.

As a clinical naturopath, nutritionist and herbalist, I highly recommend herbs such as nettle and alfalfa for reducing your dog's itchiness, while gotu kola is my absolute go-to herb for tissue healing and repair. Gotu kola also supports the immune system and reduces inflammation – both of which play a significant role in the development and maintenance of skin disorders and allergies in our dogs. You can find it in [Big Dog Pet Food's herbal blend](#). I also recommend introducing a potent Omega-3 supplement such as [Antinol Plus](#) to reduce inflammation and promote a healthy skin barrier.





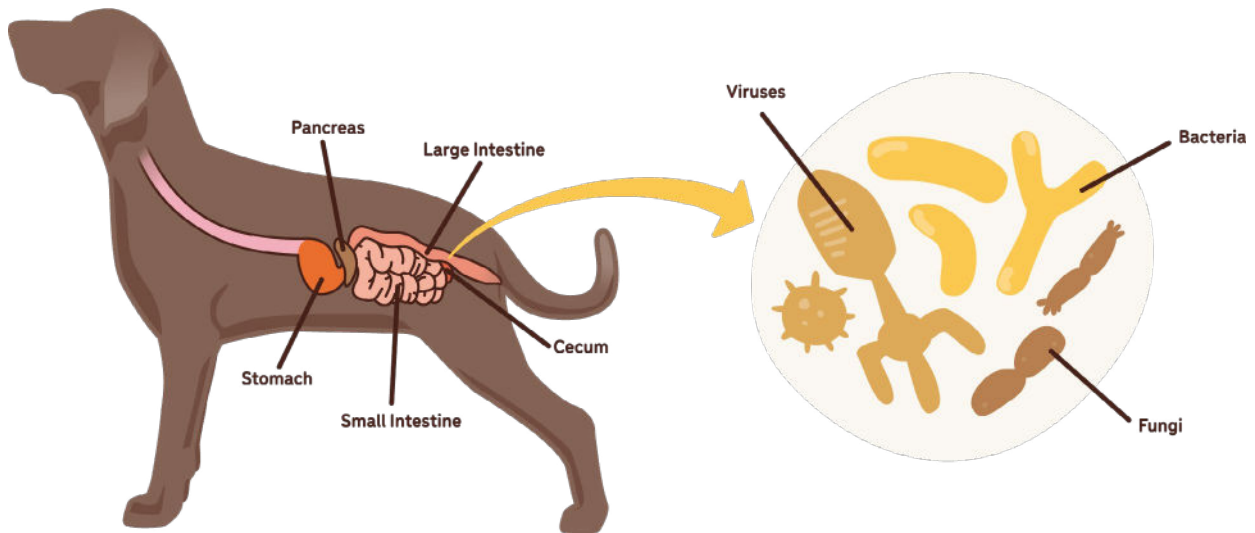
Feeding a Species-Appropriate Wholefood Diet – What does the science say?

Increasing research highlights the benefits of feeding a non-processed meat-based diet (NPMD) and the detrimental effects of an ultra-processed carbohydrate-based diet (UPCD) (i.e. kibble). Studies from the University of Helsinki and others provide significant insights:

- **Otitis (ear infection):** Puppies fed a NPMD had a significantly reduced risk of otitis, while those on a UPCD showed increased risk.
- **Atopy (allergy):** A raw diet in early life was linked to fewer allergy and atopy symptoms in adulthood, while high-processed diets increased these risks.
- **Chronic Enteropathy (persistent gastrointestinal symptoms):** Feeding a NPMD and table scraps during puppyhood significantly reduced chronic enteropathy incidence, whereas a UPCD increased it.
- **Overall wellbeing:** When exploring the health impacts of various diets, the findings indicated that dogs on raw and fresh diets had better overall health markers compared to those on ultra-processed diets.

These studies emphasise the importance of a species-appropriate diet for long-term health benefits in dogs.





Inside a dog's microbiome

Healthy/Diverse Microbiome



- ↓ Inflammation
- ↑ Immune system function
- ↑ Digestive function

Unhealthy/Limited Diversity Microbiome



- ↑ Allergies
- ↑ Skin conditions
- ↑ Weight gain/obesity
- ↓ Immune function
- ↓ Kidney function
- ↓ Cognition & Behaviour

Differences in healthy and unhealthy microbiomes

Raw Food to Restore the Microbiome

Your dog's gastrointestinal tract contains a complex mixture of bacteria, fungi and even viruses that have the ability to impact their metabolism, body condition, immune function, allergy risk, ability to absorb nutrients, and many important hormonal responses.

Commercial kibbles and natural raw food diets differ widely in their nutrient sources and ratios (particularly of proteins and carbohydrates), and these differences have been shown to significantly alter the abundance and diversity of the canine gut microbiota. As such, feeding a species-appropriate, nutrient-rich diet that more closely resembles the canine ancestral diet would seem to be the sensible approach if we want our dogs to achieve optimal gastrointestinal health and all of the health benefits that come from that – particularly in relation to allergies.

There is accumulating evidence that the gut microbiome has impacts far beyond its local effects within the gastrointestinal tract. In fact, the health of the microbiome is now thought to play a key role in the development of allergies, kidney function, obesity, cognition, behaviour, various immune disorders and skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis.

Scientists have yet to discover the full impact of the complex microbial populations that reside within our dogs, but what is becoming clear is that the diet we feed has a direct effect on the composition and diversity of the microbiome and may be the single most important factor in preventing illness and maintaining health. Feeding a high-quality raw diet like [Big Dog Pet Food's Low Allergy Range](#) promotes improved microbial diversity and a healthier gut, as well as global anti-inflammatory effects and a reduction in skin conditions and allergic reactions. It's one of the first things that Dr Nicole does when treating a patient with allergic skin disease. She recommends removing ultra-processed foods from their diet and transitions them to a balanced wholefood diet.



Dietary Recommendations

The most reliable way to pinpoint a food allergy in your dog is to feed them a novel, single-protein diet for at least 6–8 weeks. Whether you choose a home-cooked meal or a commercial option, it's crucial to know exactly what ingredients are in the food and to ensure it's free from undisclosed contaminants. Standard commercial foods like canned goods and kibbles often fall short in this regard, as numerous studies have shown that contamination is prevalent in such products.

Therefore, when exploring suitable dietary options for your dog, especially if they have allergies or sensitivities, there are several key factors to look for:

- Opt for foods prepared in smaller, fresher batches, as this allows you to better ascertain the ingredients and minimises the risk of allergenic substances slipping in during production.

- Choose food made from fresh, human-grade ingredients without any synthetic fillers. While making your dog's food at home is often a good option, you can also select a commercial dog food that is crafted in small batches and focuses on the quality and purity of ingredients.
- Steer clear of mass-produced commercial foods. Even though manufacturers of 'hypoallergenic' or 'limited ingredient' dog foods claim to follow best practices, there's a lack of oversight and regulation in the production of these types of products. Evidence suggests that the ingredient lists on commercial kibble and canned foods are not always reliable.

Before embarking on an elimination diet, it's important to eliminate other potential causes for your dog's symptoms. Symptoms that may seem indicative of a food allergy or intolerance could also signify other medical issues. Accurately pinpointing the root cause is vital for determining whether an elimination diet is the right course of action.



Photo provided by Bridget Martin



The Importance of Avoiding High-Histamine Foods

Histamines are naturally occurring compounds that play a role in immune responses, including allergic reactions. Foods with high levels of histamines can exacerbate allergy symptoms, making it vital to choose low-histamine options whenever possible.

High-histamine foods to avoid:



Canned Fish: Such as canned sardines or tuna.



Processed Dog Foods: Some commercial dog foods may contain high-histamine meat by-products.



Leftover Meat: Meat that has been stored for an extended period can develop higher histamine levels.



Fermented Foods: Like kefir or certain yogurts.



Aged Meats: Such as certain types of air-dried jerky made for dogs.



Vegetables and fruits: Dried fruit, pear, banana, avocado, eggplant, spinach, strawberry, pineapple, kiwi fruit, tomato.

Low-histamine foods to consider:



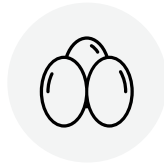
Fresh, Lean Meats: Like chicken, turkey, beef, goat, lamb and kangaroo.



Freshly Caught Fish: Such as salmon, cod, whitefish, trout, perch.



Fresh Vegetables: Carrot, cucumber, zucchini, pumpkin, broccoli.



Plain, Cooked Eggs: Preferably fresh and organic.



Fresh Fruits: Such as blueberry, apple and watermelon, in moderation.

By being aware of the histamine content in foods, you can make more informed choices that may help alleviate your dog's allergy symptoms.

Herbal Teas

Another strategy to consider for managing your dog's allergies is incorporating herbal teas into their meals. This is an affordable, straightforward, and generally safe approach that can offer relief from common allergic symptoms. **Effective herbal teas for allergies include:**



Decaffeinated Green Tea

Green tea contains a potent compound called EGCG, which has been proven to combat allergies. It does so by inhibiting the production of histamine and immunoglobulin E (IgE), both of which play a significant role in triggering and sustaining allergic reactions.



Nettle Tea

Studies have shown that nettle extract can mitigate allergic symptoms by suppressing histamine production. Furthermore, nettle has anti-inflammatory properties, which can help reduce the body's release of inflammation-inducing compounds.



Chamomile Tea

Known for its soothing properties, chamomile tea can be beneficial in alleviating skin irritations and calming the digestive system, which can sometimes be affected by allergies.



Rooibos Tea

This caffeine-free option is rich in antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties. It also contains the flavonoid quercetin, making it another excellent choice for dogs experiencing allergic reactions.



To create a nourishing herbal tea for your dog, add one tea bag of your chosen herbal blend to one cup of boiling water. Allow the tea to steep until it cools down to room temperature. After the tea has cooled, transfer it to an airtight container and store it in the refrigerator to keep it fresh.

When it's time to serve your dog's meal, simply add a small amount of the herbal tea to their food. This can be especially beneficial if mixed in with a wet food diet but can also be drizzled over dry kibble. Remember to shake or stir the container of tea before using, as some of the herbal compounds may settle at the bottom.

As a general guide: small dogs: 1–2 tbsps; medium dogs: ¼ cup; large dogs: ½ cup; giant dogs: 1 cup. Always start with a smaller amount and increase to a higher amount gradually.



Top Tip from Dr Nicole

In addition to their dietary benefits, these herbal teas can serve a dual purpose by being applied topically to alleviate symptoms. I often use tea rinses as first aid management of rashes that may come with allergies. Whether your dog is suffering from itchy skin, hot spots, or minor rashes, a cooled herbal tea rinse can offer immediate, soothing relief.

The active compounds in these herbal teas possess anti-inflammatory and antihistamine properties that can help reduce redness, itchiness, and irritation when applied directly to the affected area.

To use the herbal tea topically, simply soak a soft cloth or cotton pad in the cooled, brewed tea. Gently apply to the irritated skin. You can even use it on wounds and sensitive areas like the eyes and nose! Alternatively, you can also use a spray bottle to mist the tea onto your dog's skin or add it to a bath for a more immersive treatment.

Lifestyle Recommendations

Managing Allergies at Home

Maintaining a clean living environment is a cornerstone for managing allergies in your dog. To minimise exposure to potential allergens, you may want to consider a multi-pronged approach that goes beyond basic cleanliness.

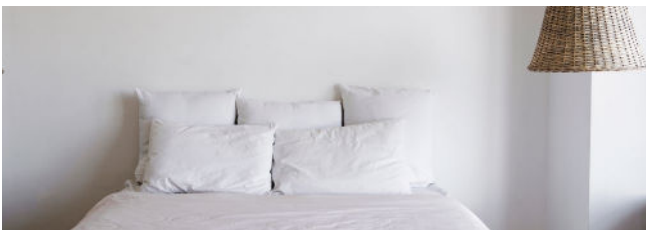
Here are some recommendations:



Weekly Laundering: Wash your dog's bedding in hot water every week. This can significantly reduce allergens like dust mites, pet dander, and other irritants that might cause or exacerbate allergic reactions.



Frequent Vacuuming: Make it a point to vacuum your home regularly, paying special attention to areas where your pet frequently spends time. Some vacuums come with pet-friendly attachments specifically designed to pick up pet hair and dander.



Bedroom Restrictions: If possible, keep pets out of human bedrooms, as these spaces often have higher concentrations of dust mites. Limiting access to these areas can reduce the exposure to these common allergens.



Non-Carpeted Sleeping Areas: Encourage your pet to sleep in rooms without carpeting. Hardwood or tile floors are less likely to harbour allergens like dust mites, making them a better choice for night-time rest.



Elevated Pet Beds: Opt for elevated beds made of synthetic materials such as 'shade cloth,' and frames made of non-porous materials like aluminium. Elevated beds are less inviting to mites and easier to clean,



Cotton Bedding: When selecting sheets for your pet's bed, opt for 100% cotton. Cotton is not only comfortable but also easier to launder and more effective at shedding mite debris during washing.



Natural Fabric for Pet Clothing: If your pet wears jumpers or coats, especially during the winter, it's advisable to steer clear of synthetic materials. Opt instead for garments made from natural cotton fabrics, as they are less likely to trigger allergies and are also easier to clean. Just like cotton bedding, cotton clothing is more effective at shedding allergen particles during washing.

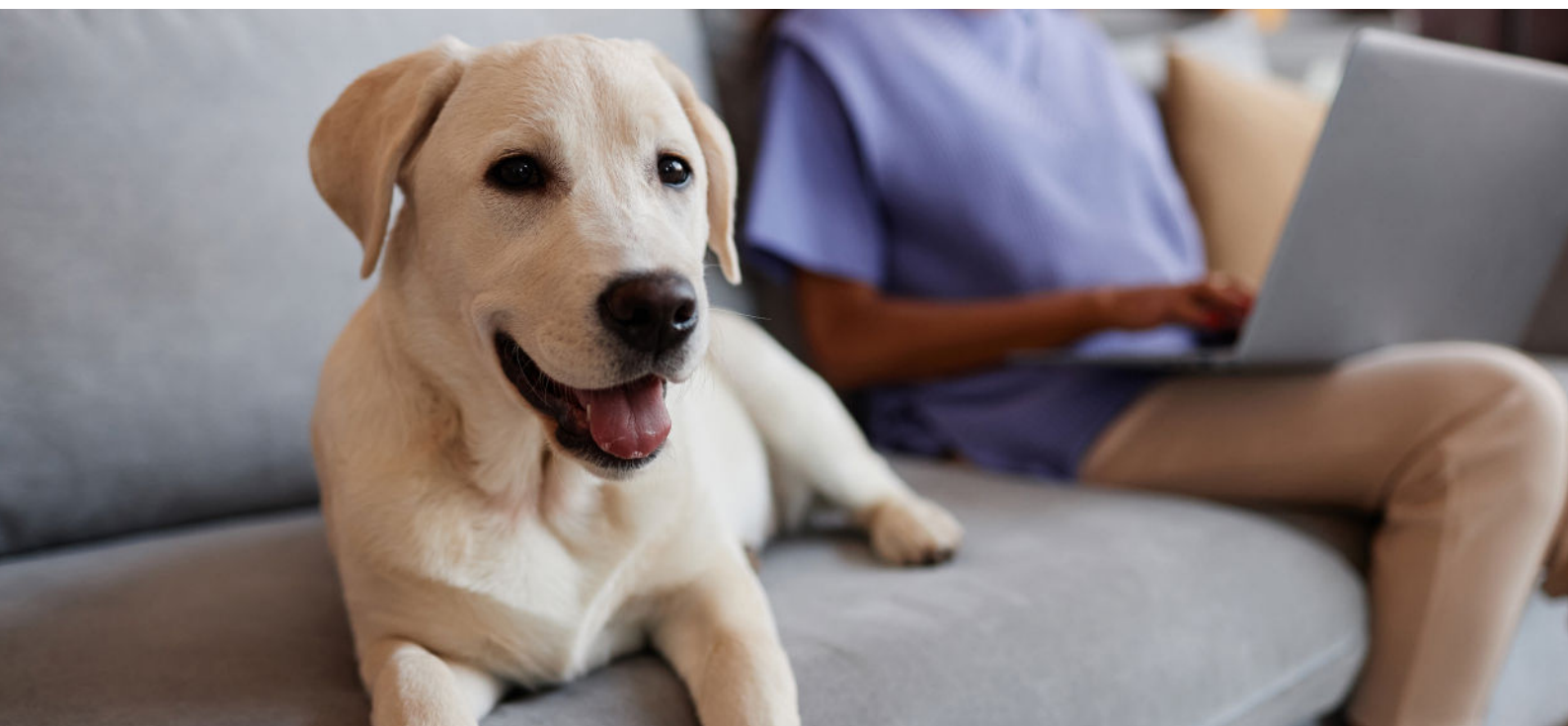


Air Purifiers: Consider installing an air purifier equipped with a HEPA filter in rooms where your pet spends the most time. This can help capture airborne allergens like pollen, dust, and pet dander, offering an added layer of protection against allergies.



Limit Outdoor Exposure During High-Risk Conditions: Be mindful of the weather and environmental factors that could exacerbate your pet's allergies. Limit outdoor activities during high pollen counts, windy days, or periods of high humidity. Early morning and late evening hours are often peak times for allergens like pollen to be in the air. Additionally, consider keeping your dog off freshly mowed lawns for several hours to minimise contact with stirred-up allergens.

By taking these steps, you'll be going above and beyond to create an allergy-friendly environment for your dog. If you're aware that your dog suffers from seasonal allergies that manifest during specific times of the year, prevention becomes more manageable. Consider starting natural supplements a month in advance of the season when symptoms typically appear. This proactive approach can help mitigate symptoms and improve your dog's quality of life. The key is early intervention and ongoing management, not just to treat allergies but also to enhance your dog's overall wellbeing.





Springtime Grooming Tips

By Lara Shannon

As we know, your dog is more likely to suffer with allergies during the spring than any other time of year. Combine this with a seasonal shed, and your dog might not be feeling their best.

So what can we do to help them keep their skin and coat in tip-top condition during the warmer months?

Weekly brushing

As the weather warms up, [brushing your dog's hair at least once a week](#), or more for longer coats, will help to reduce excess hair, shedding and mats. A specialised detangling brush or Flexi Slicker brush is good for most coats.

Keeping double-coated dogs cooler

[Removing the undercoat on dogs with a double coat](#) in the warmer months is one of the most important springtime grooming tips, as it is vital to let their skin breathe and allows the outer coat to circulate the air through.

Shaving a double-coated dog in the warmer weather is not recommended as it is the outer coat that helps keep them cool.

A deshedding rake or, for the thicker double coats, a serrated dematting tool can also help stop knots and matting from building up.

Trimming their fur

Another of our key springtime grooming tips to help keep away [grass seeds](#) and allergens is to keep your dog's paws, bottom and around their eyes trimmed in between professional grooms.

Bathing

Regular baths using a mild dog shampoo can help keep your dog clean and healthy. If they have sensitive skin or allergies, [Shy Tiger's Soothe + Skin shampoo and conditioner](#) is formulated using cutting-edge plant science to support the skin barrier, whilst soothing and nourishing sore, inflamed skin.



Don't over-wash

Although it's tempting to wash your dog regularly, especially if they're out and about a lot, try to avoid bathing them too often as it can strip their coat of its natural oils. Use a skin-sensitive shampoo as recommended above to help protect them from external allergens.

Flea and Tick protection

Springtime sees a boom in the number of fleas and ticks in the environment, so make sure your dog's tick and flea prevention is up to date.

Give them a wipe

Instead of bathing every time they go out, consider using bamboo or reusable wipes to wipe away any dirt or allergens they can pick up on walks. Make sure to wipe down their feet, legs and bellies daily to help with any irritants. You could use [Shy Tiger's Soothe + Skin Protect](#) spray on your wipes if they are struggling with particularly sore skin.

Springtime allergies can also cause ear infections, so regularly check their ears and gently give them a wipe, drying them thoroughly after washing or wiping as well.



Targeted Supplementation

Stabilise Mast Cells

Antihistamines work by preventing histamine release from a type of immune cell in the body called mast cells. When activated, mast cells trigger an allergic response by releasing prostaglandins and other inflammatory compounds, as well as histamine. Mast cells then communicate with other key players in the inflammatory process, setting off an inflammatory cascade.

Mast cells are distributed throughout the body but are found in greater concentrations in specific areas that interface between the internal body and the external environment. For instance, they are abundant in sinus cavities, explaining why exposure to allergens often leads to symptoms like a runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing. Similarly, their

presence in the gut is responsible for triggering gastrointestinal issues such as vomiting and diarrhoea when allergens are ingested. Additionally, the concentration of mast cells near the skin's surface can give rise to skin-related symptoms like lesions, redness, and persistent itching.

Many dog owners might instinctively opt for pharmaceutical antihistamines, known for providing rapid relief from symptoms like itching and sneezing. However, there are also natural alternatives that can effectively alleviate symptoms, albeit with a slower onset of action. These natural options offer another avenue for managing your dog's allergies, allowing for a more holistic approach to treatment.



Recommendation #3

Palmitoylethanolamide (aka PEA)

PEA is a naturally occurring compound that is produced by most of the body's cells and tissues. Unfortunately, modern lifestyles subject our dogs to a wide array of external and internal stressors. Research indicates that under these conditions, the body's natural ability to produce PEA may be insufficient to meet the body's demand. In such cases,



Supports nerve & joint health



Promotes Healthy Skin



Maintains healthy gut function



Aids mobility



supplementing with PEA has been demonstrated to fill this gap and offer significant health benefits.

PEA has gained attention for its anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties. It also acts as a natural antihistamine and has proven efficacy in treating atopic dermatitis in dogs. PEA acts on a cellular receptor level to stabilise mast cells, preventing them from releasing inflammatory substances such as histamine. By inhibiting the activation of mast cells, PEA can effectively reduce allergy symptoms, offering a natural yet powerful option for managing atopic dermatitis in dogs.

SKIN ALLERGY AVENGERS

Recommendation #4

Antinol Plus for skin, coat and joint health

Antinol Plus contains a highly potent blend of marine lipids and is commonly used to support skin health in allergic dogs. It is a natural anti-inflammatory and works in various ways to soothe skin and maintain health throughout the year, particularly in the spring.



Antinol Plus supports your dog's skin health by:



Improving the integrity of the skin barrier – strengthening the skin cell walls and preventing water loss.



Modulating the immune response. This enables your dog to cope better when faced with seasonal allergens.



Providing a natural anti-inflammatory effect during flare-ups. This helps to break the itch cycle and reduce scratching and discomfort.



Promoting healthy skin, resulting in more comfortable, hydrated skin and a shiny coat.

Antinol Plus also works alongside your dog's medication. It is clinically proven to work in synergy with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). It is also scientifically proven to reduce the likelihood of 'rebound' symptoms if you want to reduce or taper your dog's skin medication.



Balance the Immune System

Research has shown that allergies often arise from an imbalanced immune system that overreacts to substances that are generally harmless, such as pollen, dust, or certain foods. In these cases, the immune system misidentifies these substances as threats, leading to an overproduction of Immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies and the release of inflammatory substances like histamine from mast cells. This results in the familiar symptoms of allergies, such as itching, sneezing, and gastrointestinal issues. Therefore, balancing the immune system is a key aspect of managing and reducing allergy symptoms.

A well-regulated immune system can discriminate between harmful pathogens and benign substances, reducing the likelihood of an allergic response.

Various approaches, including immunotherapy, the use of specific probiotics, and nutritional supplements, have been shown to modulate immune responses effectively. These interventions aim to 'retrain' the immune system to respond more appropriately to allergens, thereby reducing symptoms. Achieving a balanced immune response not only alleviates current symptoms but also provides a more long-term solution by addressing the root cause of allergic reactions. Therefore, immune system modulation is increasingly recognised as a vital component of comprehensive allergy management.

SKIN ALLERGY AVENGERS

Recommendation #5

Pure Colostrum

Bovine colostrum, the nutrient-rich first milk produced by cows after giving birth, has been the subject of extensive research for its immunomodulatory properties. Studies suggest that bovine colostrum can help balance the immune system by modulating immune responses and promoting gut health. This is particularly beneficial for reducing allergy symptoms, as allergies often arise from an overactive immune system.

Colostrum's high immunoglobulin content can bind to allergens, neutralising them and preventing them from triggering allergic reactions. Additionally, components of bovine colostrum, such as epithelial growth factors and the various immune factors, have



Healthy Immune Defence



Maintains Gut Barrier Integrity



Ideal support for puppies



Healthy Aging

been demonstrated to reduce hyperpermeability of the gut and to repair the damage and irritation done to the gut by NSAIDs, which are often prescribed in allergic conditions. Incorporating bovine colostrum into a comprehensive treatment plan can offer a natural and effective way to manage allergies and promote overall immune health.

Saccharomyces boulardii

The gut flora's role in regulating the immune response and maintaining a balanced immune system is crucial in preventing the development of allergies. Various factors such as a poor diet, stress, particular medications, and infections can destabilise the gut's microbial community. This state of imbalance, termed dysbiosis, compromises the immune system's discernment between harmful and harmless agents, thereby predisposing dogs to allergic responses.

Probiotics, such as *Saccharomyces boulardii* (*S. boulardii*), offer a potential solution in managing allergies by restoring the gut flora's balance and modulating the immune response. This beneficial yeast supports the formation of regulatory immune cells, like regulatory T cells, which are vital in curbing overzealous immune responses. By promoting the proliferation of beneficial bacteria and inhibiting the growth of detrimental ones, *S. boulardii* aids in re-establishing equilibrium in the gut microbiota, thereby enhancing immune functionality.

S. boulardii is also noted for its anti-inflammatory effects. It has the ability to fine-tune the immune system and diminish the generation of pro-inflammatory substances like cytokines. In curbing inflammation, *S. boulardii* may help ease symptoms associated with atopic dermatitis, such as redness, itchiness, and swelling.



Medicinal mushrooms

Mushrooms like *Ganoderma lucidum* (reishi), *Lentinula edodes* (shiitake), *Grifola frondosa* (maitake), *Trametes versicolor* (turkey tail), and *Cordyceps sinensis* (cordyceps) offer a range of immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory benefits that can be helpful in managing allergy symptoms. For instance, reishi is known to inhibit histamine release, the primary culprit behind symptoms such as itching and sneezing, while shiitake stimulates the production of immune cells like T cells and macrophages, strengthening the body's defence against allergens.

Maitake and turkey tail both contain compounds that can not only modulate the immune system but also inhibit histamine release, potentially reducing allergic reactions. Cordyceps, on the other hand, is lauded for its anti-inflammatory properties and its ability to improve respiratory health, making it useful in alleviating symptoms like sneezing and nasal congestion. Together, these mushrooms offer a natural approach to fortifying the immune system and managing the symptoms of allergies.



Restore Gut Health

The connection between gut health and allergies is becoming increasingly evident. The gut serves as a habitat for trillions of microbes, commonly referred to as gut microbiota. Research suggests that people with allergies frequently show a distinct gut microbiota composition in comparison to those without allergies. Typically, they have fewer beneficial bacteria and a heightened presence of potentially harmful ones. Additionally, a compromised gut lining, often referred to as leaky gut, can exacerbate allergic responses. In this state, the intestinal barrier allows

undigested food particles and other substances to pass into the bloodstream, triggering an immune response that can contribute to allergies and inflammatory conditions.

Supporting gut health with targeted natural ingredients can be particularly beneficial for restoring gut flora balance, enhancing the intestinal barrier, and soothing the digestive tract, all of which contribute to reduced allergic symptoms and improved skin health.

Key ingredients to look out for:

Saccharomyces boulardii: aids in mitigating allergy symptoms by enhancing tight junction proteins, which maintain the gut lining's integrity.

L-glutamine: helps reduce gut permeability and supports the healing of intestinal injuries.

Slippery elm* and *Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM): offer protective, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant benefits that contribute to reducing oxidative stress and inflammation, which can compromise immunity.

Glycine, pectin, marshmallow root, deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL), and chamomile: play vital roles in digestive support by maintaining gut lining integrity, promoting beneficial bacteria growth, and soothing gastrointestinal discomfort.

Quercetin and turmeric: further enhance gut barrier function with their anti-inflammatory and mast cell-stabilising effects, reducing histamine release that often exacerbates allergic symptoms.

Zinc, vitamin C, and Methylcobalamin (B12): essential for strengthening gut lining tight junctions, enhancing immune response, and addressing deficiencies common in chronic digestive disorders, ultimately supporting both gut and skin health.





- Canine Ceuticals Gut Protect (Prebiotics, Probiotics, HMOs + Bifidus)
- Canine Ceuticals Collagen Forte (Hydrolyzed Collagen Peptides)
- Canine Ceuticals Pure Milk Thistle
- Canine Ceuticals Pure Milk
- Canine Ceuticals Pure Soy
- Canine Ceuticals Gut Protect
- Canine Ceuticals Replace-A-Bone
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Organ Blend
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Beef Liver
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Beef Pancreas
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Lamb Liver
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Beef Pancreas
- Canine Ceuticals Organic Super Cream
- Canine Ceuticals Gut Restore
- Canine Ceuticals Pure SB
- Canine Ceuticals Pure Colostrum
- Canine Ceuticals PEA PLUS
- Canine Ceuticals Beef Bone Broth+





Final Words

As we reach the end of our guide to navigating all aspects of allergies in your dog, we hope you have come away feeling confident that you can find a solution that works. In your journey to address your dog's allergies, it's essential to remember that resolving symptoms – especially in chronic cases – requires time, patience, and a multifaceted approach. Achieving lasting relief is seldom a quick fix, but when you holistically address all contributing factors, including diet, supplements, behaviour, and environmental triggers, you increase the likelihood of long-term improvement.

We understand that it can be challenging to see your furry friend struggle, but rest assured that with comprehensive and consistent care, a resolution

of symptoms is indeed possible. Stick with your tailored regimen, consult your veterinarian or other healthcare professional for ongoing advice, and be patient as you work towards restoring your dog's health and wellbeing.

For further support or advice, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of The Allergy Avengers.

Good Luck.



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Narelle Cooke

AND *THE*
SKIN ALLERGY
AVENGERS



Rescuing Your Dog from
the *ITCH* – Together

