



**SPECIFIC<sup>®</sup>**

VETERINARY PET NUTRITION

A simple guide to  
**MANAGING SKIN CONDITIONS IN DOGS**



A BIT OF SCRATCHING IS NORMAL IN DOGS BUT **SCRATCHING IN RESPONSE TO EXCESSIVE ITCHING IS CALLED PRURITUS** AND IT'S ONE OF THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR VET VISITS.



## CAUSES OF SKIN PROBLEMS IN DOGS

There are **different causes of skin problems** and finding out which your dog is suffering from will help **you and your vet treat both the symptoms and the cause.**

### PARASITES

One of the most common causes of skin problems are parasites such as fleas or mites.

### ALLERGY

An allergy is the immune system overreacting to a harmless substance by releasing various chemicals, including histamine, which cause itching. Allergies fall into 3 main groups

- o **Flea allergies**
- o **Environmental allergies** – a reaction to substances such as dust, pollen or mould
- o **Food allergies** – a reaction to certain foodstuffs. Any food can cause allergies although typically it is the protein that is the culprit.

The foods that most commonly cause allergies are – in descending order beef, dairy, wheat, egg, chicken and then lamb. It is often claimed that wheat or grains are one the worst culprits but the evidence points to wheat being a long way behind beef and dairy.

- o **Combined allergies** – often these types of allergies combine.

### STRESS

This is rarer but some dogs may excessively lick their skin, groom or scratch to cope with stress.

### ENDOCRINE

If one of the endocrine organs fails to secrete the right amount of hormone this can cause skin disease, hair loss or abnormal skin quality.



## INFORMATION FOR YOUR VET

Whatever the cause, skin problems are distressing for your dog and a visit to the vet is probably in order. To treat the disease properly the vet needs to treat the symptoms of the disease but also identify the cause.

Your vet will need to collect a thorough history by discussing your dog's problem with you – **you can help your vet by completing the form on the following page.**

## VET INFORMATION CHECKLIST

What symptoms have you noticed?			
When did you first notice the symptoms?			
Is your dog itching or scratching?			
If your dog is itching and scratching whereabouts on the body?			
Is your dog itching and scratching all the time or just at certain times of the day?			
<b>What is your dog's general health like?</b>			
	More than usual	The same as usual	Less than usual
Eating			
Drinking			
Exercise			
<b>List everything that you have fed them in the last week</b>			
Main food			
Treats			
Human food			
Supplements			
<b>List all medications they are currently on</b>			
Do you have any other pets?	Y	N	
Do these or any family members in the house have any skin problems?	Y	N	
If YES, please state			
<b>Stool Description</b>	<b>Score</b> (Please tick box)		
Very dry hard faeces. May be light and gritty. No moist patch.	1		
Firm segmented motions – dry, no moist patch.	2		
Firm with a moist appearance. Leaves a moist patch.	3		
Well-formed but slightly soft. Leaves a moist patch.	4		
Loose stool. Wet when freshly passed. Leaves a wet patch.	5		
Very loose stool with almost no solid form.	6		
Severe watery diarrhoea.	7		

## HOW FOOD CAN HELP WITH SKIN PROBLEMS?

Whilst it is obvious that **changing foods can help with skin conditions** caused by foods, it is also true that **food can help with skin problems in other ways.**

### COPING WITH FOOD ALLERGIES AND SENSITIVITIES

**When dealing with a food intolerance look for foods with unusual proteins that your dog is unlikely to have eaten before.** It also helps to give them food with fewer ingredients as this reduces the chance of feeding them a problem causing ingredient.

**Hydrolysed proteins are also good.** It is almost always a protein that causes an allergy. Hydrolysis breaks the protein down into smaller pieces using enzymes. When the protein is broken down then the body is unable to recognise it so doesn't react to it.

### FOODS WITH SKIN SUPPORTING NUTRIENTS

**Nutrients such as Omega-3** from fish oils and vitamins and minerals such as zinc, vitamin A and B-complex can all help improve skin condition.



### RELIEVING THE SYMPTOMS

**Whatever the cause of the skin condition, inflammation will be involved.** Omega-3 fish oils can support the body's natural anti-inflammatory process to help with the distressing itching your dog will be experiencing.

## WASHING AND CLEANING YOUR DOG'S COAT

**In managing your pet's allergy it is important to treat both the underlying cause of their allergy but also to provide your pet's skin with a supply of skin-supporting nutrients.** Medicated shampoos, conditioners and wipes are available from your vet; that help to soothe and hydrate your pet's skin and provide a supply of vital nutrients to support a healthy skin and coat.



## TESTING FOR FOOD ALLERGIES – ELIMINATION TRIALS



**If your vet suspects that it is a food that is the cause of the problem** then it is likely they will ask you run an **elimination and re-challenge trial.**

**Food elimination trials are still the best way of finding out whether it is a food allergy** and if so which are the problem ingredients. There are skin and blood tests but these are not very accurate, with high levels of both false positive and false negative.

### STEP 1

**Work out what your dog has been fed**

Think about everything they have eaten - main meals, treats and human food. What was in these foods? This gives you a list of possible suspects.

### STEP 2

**This is called the ELIMINATION PHASE**

Find a food with none of the possible suspects in it. These could be homemade diets but there are a number of commercial foods designed for this that have unusual ingredients or hydrolysed proteins – which your dog is unlikely to have eaten before.

**Change your dog over to the new food over about a week.** Start by feeding them about 25% of the new food and 75% of the old then gradually increase the amount of the new food so that after 7 to 10 days they have fully changed over. Feed your dog this food for about 8 weeks. At the end of this time they should have improved – if they haven't then it is unlikely to be food that is the problem.

### STEP 3

**This is called the RE-CHALLENGE PHASE.**

Reintroduce then to their old food and see if the symptoms return. If they don't then the improvement may have been caused by something else and it was probably not food that was causing the problem. If the symptoms do reappear then it's almost certain that it is something in their old food that was the cause of the problem.

### STEP 4

**Work out the ingredient(s) problem**

Put them back on the elimination diet food until they get better, then add into their diet one ingredient a time, from their old food, and feed that for a few days to see if the symptoms reappear. If they do then that's a problem ingredients.

**Remember there may be more than one problem ingredient from their old food so you need to work through all of them. Once you have done that – then you have a list of ingredients to avoid when deciding what to feed them long term.**

**Remember -** when you are doing an elimination trial **you need control every single thing they eat** including treats, table scraps, and bits of food they grab off the floor or food from other dogs in the house.

**During the elimination trial it is important that you keep detailed notes so that you can see how it is progressing – this diary will help you record the details.**

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

In this phase you have moved your dog onto a **special elimination trial diet** that should have no problem causing ingredients in it.

## WEEK 1



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 2



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 3



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 4



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 5



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 6



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 7



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 8



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

WEEK 9



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# ELIMINATION PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

WEEK 10



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# RE-CHALLENGE PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

In this phase you have put your dog back onto its old food to **see if the symptoms reappear**.

## WEEK 1



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# RE-CHALLENGE PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 2



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# RE-CHALLENGE PHASE PROGRESS DIARY

## WEEK 3



Food Eaten	Medication	Any other food items
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

### My dog has been scratching/biting/licking more frequently

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### My dog has been losing more hair than usual

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

### Is there any change in your dog's behaviour or mood (more lazy/nervous/aggressive)?

Not at all		A little bit		Quite a lot		A lot	
------------	--	--------------	--	-------------	--	-------	--

# SPECIFIC™ DIETS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SKIN PROBLEMS

## FOODS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FOOD ALLERGIES



**DGIBRGDOHUHDDHPHW**  
**FKRLFHBIHWDGGUIRRGVVRWDLDDLPPLWHGXPESHU**  
**RIUHLHVVWVGGEDVHGBBDDGDLFHGUIRRG**  
**RUDDPEDGDLFHBIWGLHW**

**BRGDOHUHDDHPHW**  
**GUIRRGEDVHGBKGUROVHGVDOPRSURWHLDGDLFHLYL**  
**KLKGLHVWLELWLDGDRDOOHUHLFLW**

## FOODS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ALLERGIES AND SKIN PROBLEMS NOT RELATED TO FOOD ALLERGY

**BNLXFWLRBXSSRUW**  
**RWDLVXPOWLSOHVNLXSSRUWLXWULHVVBRPHDDWWDFLGV**  
**IURPLVKRLOBRPHDDWWDFLGURPERUDHRLOBLWDPLO**  
**DG%BRPSOHSURWHLDLFDGVOHHLXP**

## FOODS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COMBINED ALLERGIES



**DGIDOHUHDDHPHWBOXV**  
**FKRLFHBIHWDGGUIRRGVVKDWBRPELHDDOOHU**  
**LUHGLHVVWVWKLKDYHOVBIHNLXSSRUWLXWULHVV**  
**WRKHOSGRVWKRPELHGDOOHULHV**

**%DVHGBKGUROVHGVDOPRSURWHLDGDLFHLYLKLK**  
**GLHVWLELWLDGDRDOOHUHLFLW**

**RWDLVXPOWLSOHVNLXSSRUWLXWULHVVBRPHDDWWDFLGV**  
**IURPLVKRLOBRPHDDWWDFLGURPERUDHRLOBLWDPLO**  
**DG%BRPSOHSURWHLDLFDGVOHHLXP**

If you have any questions about the **SPECIFIC** diets, please talk to your nutritional advisor or veterinary nurse or contact:

**Dechra Veterinary Products Ltd.** | Sansaw Business Park | Hadnall | Shrewsbury | SY4 4AS  
T: +44(0)1939 211200 | F: +44(0)1939 211201 | [www.dechra.com](http://www.dechra.com)

Dechra Veterinary Products Limited is a trading business of Dechra Pharmaceuticals PLC

