

Allergies and your dog Tis the season to scratch!



Allergy Season is upon us and many of our canine friends are scratching their skin raw and driving their owners insane with the constant nibbling and licking. Identifying the source of your pet's irritant and treating it can be difficult and, at times, costly.

Many dogs have red, raw underbellies that they constantly scratch at. This may be attributed to commercial deodorizers or air fresheners sprayed on their bedding or on the carpets or potent chemicals used to clean floors. These products can contain harsh or toxic chemicals that irritate your pet when they lie down. Avoid using these products in areas that your dog frequents. Try using natural enzyme sprays to deodorize, essential oils diluted in water to freshen the air and a lemon/water/vinegar solution to clean floors. If you wash your pet's bed, avoid using detergents with harsh chemicals and try using a natural fabric softener like plain white vinegar.

Some dogs chew at their back ends or spin around in circles on their butts in an attempt to relieve the itching in that area. This may be an indication of an allergen in their food. According to Chinese medicine there are food sources that are cooling to dogs with inflammatory conditions that include rabbit, duck and cod, and foods that are considered hot and should be avoided such as lamb, turkey and venison (for a full list of cooling/warming/hot foods, see our website). I have had great success with treating my dog's allergies by incorporating cooling foods into his diet, avoiding grains and adding loads of fresh fruits and vegetables to his bowl.

Dogs that chew at their paws may have sensitivities to the environment, including pollen, grass and toxins that they track in with them after their walks. Keep a bucket of fresh water by the door to rinse your dog's paws off after they have had play time outside or use the hose/ shower to rinse off any debris clinging to their fur that they may inadvertently trail into the house, on the carpet or into their pet beds.

Many allergy dogs have a particular odour to them; a smell similar to a bag of corn chips. These are the dogs that will scratch their skin raw and if you get close, the skin smells like old cheese. It is possible that your dog has an overabundance of yeast in their system that needs to be cleansed. This is best done under the guidance of a natural health practitioner. In the mean time you can wash the raw areas with a gentle anti-bacterial soap. I have had great success using a natural enzyme spray on the yeast-smelling areas (yes, the same one recommended above - safe for your furniture, carpets and dog!). The natural enzyme eliminates the bacteria and smell and is safe to spray on their paws. I use a natural silver anti-bacterial gel to sooth and heal the skin.

Protecting your dog from scratching while you make the necessary changes and allow him to heal is always a challenge, especially if you are not around 24 hours to prevent him from itching. This is where I have found a turtle neck sweater to be invaluable. An organic, lightweight, form fitting turtle neck sweater (ladies large is ideal for your average size Lab) seems to provide perfect coverage to the neck, chest, back of the fore legs and belly area, favoured areas for scratching.

Allergies are an irritant to both pets and their owners. By incorporating the ideas above you may be able to significantly improve the allergies or eliminate them altogether, effecting much needed relief to your dog. ***Vikki Crane-Small Certified Nutritional Counsellor Lab Rescue Volunteer***



Lab in Shirt Photo Hershey came to us 4 years ago when we were looking for a companion for our chocolate lab, Snickers. We needed a perfect match as our darling Snickers could be a Diva at the best of moments and needed a friend that would not challenge her and who could handle her ever-changing mood swings. Lab Rescue listened to all our needs and matched us to our perfect dog, Hershey. While we knew Hershey's allergies would be a challenge, his soft, happy-go-lucky and cuddly nature won over Snickers and our hearts too. Hershey has been the star of our household ever since and we are so thankful to Lab Rescue. Vikki & Kevin