

## **FACTS ABOUT FOOD ALLERGY AND HYPOALLERGENIC DIETS**

1. Certain foods, food preservatives and additives, when ingested may cause itchy skin disease in predisposed animals.
2. This is an acquired disease and frequently the animal may have been ingesting the allergenic food for months or years before any problems arise.
3. With the digestive process and transit times through the intestines it is possible for an animal to continue reacting to a previously ingested allergen for six to eight weeks.
4. there is no easy test that will tell us if your pet has a food allergy.
5. To determine if a pet has a food allergy, you must put them on a hypoallergenic diet. **This means nothing but the hypoallergenic diet and water can be ingested by the pet for six to eight weeks.**

## **HYPOALLERGENIC DIET PROTOCOL= the elimination diet**

1. The diet consists of a protein, a carbohydrate, and water. The meals can be cooked in any fashion. Do not use butter, margarine or any seasonings except salt. Trim or strain off any excess fat. The meat drippings can be added to the boiled rice or potatoes for flavor. **When cooked, mix one part meat to three parts rice or potatoes.** Safflower oil may be added. Examples of diets that may be used are fish/potato, rabbit/rice, beans/rice and horsemeat/rice. If home cooking is not appropriate, then there are a number of commercial diets that have been designed to be fed specifically as an elimination diet. Examples are Hills Z/D ultra and Eukanuba Dermatitis. In the Lower Hutt/ Wellington area, horsemeat and other novel proteins can be found at Pet Essentials Mega Centre, Parumoana Street, Porirua, phone 04 237 4464. Other good sources of horsemeat/ petfoods is Super Pets, Phillipstown, Christchurch, phone 03-381-0533 or Canterbury Pet foods, 166 Bradleys Rd, Ohoka, Kaiapoi, ph.3126 502.

Cats may be fed horsemeat, venison, or rabbit alone. Commercial diets available are Waltham's Selected Protein and Hills feline z/d.

**Note: many commercial diets which purport to be limited ingredients are not. Please check with your vet.**

2. Feed only the recommended diet for six to eight weeks. In general, **three cups daily for a 10kg dog, six cups daily for dogs over 25kg.** Low fat diets require more food.

3. If snacks need to be given, use a piece of the meat or protein from the diet or puffed rice crackers.
4. Inform all household members of the importance of giving no other snacks. Keep all foods and compost out of reach of your pet. When outside keep your pet leashed so they can not sample outdoor tidbits.
5. **Remember** if your pet eats anything but the diet you may get a false result
6. Contact Duncan after six to eight weeks, THE HOME COOKED DIET IS NOT A BALANCED DIET, but is fine for short to medium periods of time.
7. Observe your pet's itching closely. Measure the severity of the itching based on a scale of one to ten with ten being how itchy your pet was when starting the diet. Also, take note of the pattern of itching on the dog.
8. Occasionally, a pet (especially cats) will not like the diet. Hang in there! Most will start eating in a couple of days. Over weight cats should not be allowed to go without food for more than two to three days.
9. Sometimes an animal will get a loose stool. If this occurs, increase the amount of rice you are giving. Vomiting has rarely been reported.
10. **Remember NO bones, rawhide chews, meat flavored snacks or tablets, bird's bread, leftovers, or anything not on your pet's diet.**

### **CHALLENGING THE ELIMINATION DIET**

If your pet improves on the elimination or hypoallergenic diet you will need to challenge that diet in a systematic fashion to work out which food has caused the allergy.

In summary, to challenge the diet, you introduce one new whole protein source at a time for one week. If there is no deterioration in the symptoms after one week, you can change to another protein, and so on. **Do not go straight to a commercial diet as this will contain a number of proteins from different sources.** Allow a washout period of two to four days between introducing a new protein by feeding the original elimination diet (wash out period).

### **FACTS – RE CHALLENGING**

Some dogs return to scratching within one to two hours, the majority within three days and some fourteen days.