

Nutritional Strategies for Seasonal Skin & Allergy Support in Pets

Developed and reviewed by the members of the Standard Process Veterinary team

Nourishing the Barrier: Skin and Allergy Support

Skin issues and seasonal challenges are among the most common reasons for veterinary visits. Itching, redness, flaking, and ear and anal gland issues often signal underlying nutritional gaps, immune imbalance, or environmental sensitivities. While there are various treatment options available, a growing body of research has shown that nutrition plays a crucial role in managing seasonal challenges and promoting skin health in pets.

The inclusion of supplements made from whole food-based ingredients is another important tool in the veterinarians' toolbox. Whole food supplements differ from synthetic isolates. They provide vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, and antioxidants in their naturally occurring forms, often with the co-factors and enzymes needed for better absorption and bioavailability. This makes them an ideal adjunct to veterinary care, particularly when managing skin health and a healthy immune response.

How the Body Deals with Allergen Exposure

When pets are exposed to allergens such as pollen, dust mites, certain foods, or flea bites, their immune systems may overreact.

1. On first exposure the body becomes sensitized—producing IgE antibodies that attach to mast cells¹
2. On subsequent exposures, these mast cells release inflammatory chemicals like histamine, causing itching, redness, swelling, and inflammation²
3. Scratching or licking damages the skin, leading to more irritation and possible bacterial invasion
4. Stress exacerbates itching and a vicious cycle begins

Common signs of a struggling immune response include itching, chewing paws, ear irritation due to inflammation and discharge, hair loss, and hot spots. Food sensitivities may cause vomiting, diarrhea, or gas.³ Cats may show respiratory symptoms such as sneezing or nasal discharge. Chronic exposure to the offending allergen causing itching and chewing can damage the skin barrier, increase susceptibility to secondary infections, and lead to thickened skin.⁴

Managing allergies requires a multimodal approach. Avoiding allergens is ideal when possible. Treatment may involve pharmaceuticals such as corticosteroids or oclacitinib, antihistamines, or immunotherapy.⁵ Nutritional support with omega-3 fatty acids, probiotics, zinc, and vitamin E can help support a healthy inflammatory response and support skin health. Elimination diets using novel or hydrolyzed proteins help identify food triggers. Whole food-based supplements and herbal therapies—such as quercetin, nettle, and milk thistle—may offer natural immune support and promote healthy inflammatory responses.

Clinical Considerations

Nutrition plays a crucial role in managing seasonal challenges and promoting skin health in dogs and cats. By addressing dietary sensitivities, providing essential nutrients, and supporting gut health, veterinarians can help alleviate skin issues and improve the overall well-being of their patients. Although further research is needed, current evidence suggests that a holistic approach to nutrition can have significant benefits for pets with seasonal challenges and skin issues.

Adjunctive Supplement Support

FEATURED PRODUCT



Canine Dermal Support

Suggested Use: **See product label for dosing by weight**

A supplement formulated to support a dog's skin using whole food ingredients. Helps to maintain healthy liver, adrenal, immune, and intestinal function, while also supporting the skin's natural ability to manage environmental exposure.



Canine and Feline Immune System Support

Suggested Use: **See product label for dosing by weight**

These supplements provide nutritional and biochemical support for healthy immune cells and tissues. They support optimal immune system function. Nutritional support of the immune system is directed at facilitating normal function and is not intended to be suppressive or stimulating.



Canine and Feline Enteric Support

Suggested Use: **See product label for dosing by weight**

These supplements contain a variety of functional foods, both plant and animal, that "feed" the various components of the digestive system. They are formulated to support the ability of the intestinal cells to function, regenerate, and respond to daily metabolic and immune challenges.



VF Antronex

Suggested Use: **See product label for dosing by weight**

When the body's natural histamine response kicks in, other systems are affected including the immune system and the liver. VF Antronex supports the liver and the body's normal detoxification mechanisms.

A Multimodal Approach to Supporting Seasonal Challenges | In Office/Physical Exam

- **History & Patterns:** Ask about onset, duration, seasonality, diet (including treats), parasite control, grooming routines, and known allergens or previous food trials.
- **Exam & Diagnostics:** Check lesion distribution, pruritus signs, ears, paws, and skin texture. Perform cytology, skin scrapings, and consider food trial or allergy testing as indicated.
- **Nutrition & Whole Food-based Support:** Review diet quality; consider limited-ingredient or novel protein diets. Recommend whole food-based supplements like fish oil, liver, probiotics, and anti-inflammatory herbs.
- **Client Communication & Plan:** Educate on chronic nature of allergies, explain multimodal approach, provide a treatment handout, and schedule follow-up in 2–4 weeks.

REFERENCES

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