

## Can Your Dog or Cat Have Food Allergies?

by Pet News

Just as in humans, dogs and cats can have certain allergies to a specific type of food. In fact, food allergies account for about 10% of all the allergies seen in dogs and cats. It is the third most common cause after flea bite allergies. Food allergies affect both males and females and can show up as early as five months and as late as twelve years of age. Food allergies in dogs and cats can be cured with a little time, effort and change in diet.

### **The difference between food allergies and intolerance to food:**

There is a difference between food allergies and food intolerance. Food allergies are true allergies and show the characteristic symptoms of allergies such as itching and skin problems associated with canine and feline allergies. Food intolerances can result in diarrhea or vomiting and do not create a typical allergic response. Food intolerances in cats or dogs would be similar to people who get an upset stomach from eating spicy foods or sometimes dairy. Fortunately, both food intolerances and allergies can be eliminated with a diet free from whatever food it is that is causing the allergy.

### **The most common food that causes allergies:**

Several studies have shown that some ingredients are more likely to cause food allergies than others. The most common food that causes allergies in dogs and cats are beef, dairy products, chicken, lamb, fish, chicken eggs, corn, wheat and soy. Unfortunately, the most common offenders are the most common ingredients in dog and cat food. While some proteins might be slightly more allergy inducing than others, many proteins are similar and therefore the allergic reactions are associated with the amount of each in the food.

### **Symptoms of food allergies in cats and dogs:**

The symptoms of food allergies are similar to those of most allergies seen in dogs and cats. The most common symptom is itchy skin affecting ↗



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*Nancy Lee and Frank (Cathcart)*

*("Food Allergies" cont.)*

primarily the face, feet, ears, forelegs, armpits and the area around the anus. Symptoms may also include chronic ear infections, hair loss, excessive scratching, hot spots and skin infections that respond to antibiotics but reoccur after antibiotics are discontinued. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish food allergies from the more common allergies. One sign is if the allergies last all year round, it is probably a food allergy.

### **Diagnosis for food allergies in cats and dogs:**

The diagnosis for food allergies is very straightforward. But due to the fact that many other problems can cause similar symptoms and that

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("Food Allergies" cont.)

many times animals are suffering from more problems than just food allergies, it is very important that all other problems are properly identified and treated prior to undergoing diagnosis for food allergies. Your vet can determine if your dog or cat is just have a normal skin allergy.

#### **Try to feed your dog or cat a new source of protein:**

A way to get rid of a food allergy is to feed your dog or cat a new food source of protein and carbohydrate for at least twelve weeks (i.e. a protein and carbohydrate that your dog or cat has never eaten before). Examples would include be rabbit and rice, or venison and potato. There are a number of such commercial diets available on the market. In addition, there are specialized diets that have the proteins and carbohydrates broken down into such small sizes that they no longer would trigger an allergic response. Regardless of the diet route you choose, the particular food needs to be the only thing that your dog or cat eats for 12 weeks. This means no treats, no flavored medications, no rawhide, cat nip, only the special food and water.

#### **Treatment for food allergies in dogs and cats:**

The treatment for food allergies is avoidance. Once you have been identified the offending food through a food trial, then they can be eliminated from the diet. Short-term relief may be gained with fatty acids, antihistamines, and steroids, but elimination of the products from the diet is the only long-term solution. .

If you choose to feed your dog or cat a homemade diet, then you can periodically change the ingredients off your food and determine which ingredients are causing the food allergy. For example, if your dog or cat's symptoms subsided on a diet of rabbit and potatoes, then you can add beef to the diet for two weeks.

If your dog or cat still showed no symptoms, then you can add chicken for two weeks. If your beloved dog or cat now has symptoms, then chicken is clearly one of the things your dog or cat was allergic to. The chicken could be withdrawn and after the symptoms cleared up, a different ingredient could be added and so on until all of the offending ingredients were identified. A diet could then be formulated that was free of the offending food sources.

You can also you the same principal with very pure pet foods that are on the market and are chicken or beef based, and then add or switch accordingly.

As with all diets, make sure to check with your veterinarian to make sure that they agree with your basic diet and that all other allergies have been ruled out.

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### Something To Try...

Spiders hate peppermint oil. Try putting some in a squirt bottle with water and spray your garage and all your door frames.

Then watch the spiders run away.

## What's Going On When You Talk To Your Pet?

by Linda Lombardi

You make a habit of talking to your pet, but does he really understand? A lot of it has to do with intonation cues.

There's no doubt that some animals can learn to understand some of what we say to them—look at "Chaser," the Border Collie, who's been scientifically shown to know 1,000 words.

But that's not what's going on when most of us talk to our pets. I chatter away in full sentences to my Pugs, despite the fact that they have both gone deaf. I also talked to the zoo animals I used to care for, greeting them in the morning and scolding them for not finishing their meals.

What is it that we get out of talking to our pets? And what do the animals gain from it? We spoke with a few experts on dogs and humans to get some insight.

#### What Do Our Pets Get Out of Our Speeches?

Alexandra Horowitz, author of *Inside of a Dog*, does research into how dogs think, but she's also interested in how people talk to them. She collects these one-sided conversations— like the owner overheard saying to his dog, "Last pee for a while, buddy," before the recent snowstorm in New York—on her Twitter feed, with the hashtag #thingsp-saysaytotheirdogs.

Surely part of why we do this is that our dogs often react like they understand us, but most of our dogs are very different from "Chaser" or the service dogs who respond appropriately to many commands. "These dogs have experienced incredible numbers of repetitions of specific words by people speaking to them," Horowitz says. "That's not the way owners typically talk to their dogs."

Ask any dog trainer and she'll tell you that most of us, even when we think we've taught a command, haven't done a thorough enough job of repetition and training in different situations. But even if our dogs do come to recognize individual words, they don't understand the ever-changing nature of sentence structure.

"Even the most skilled police dog, who can do incredible things if you say, "Go find!" won't know how to respond if you say, suddenly, "Go circle!" she says.

So when Horowitz overheard a woman saying, "No, that isn't food. No, I mean, that isn't food for you," we can be sure her dog didn't get the difference between those two sentences. However, if she spoke in a stern voice, the dog probably got at least part of the intended message.

It seems obvious to most people that dogs pick up on the emotions conveyed in our tone of voice. But what we think is obvious doesn't always turn out to be true when scientists do the research. For instance, that guilty look doesn't mean what you think it does.

In the case of our tone of voice, though, the science backs



("What's Going On When You Talk to Your Pet?" cont.)

us up. Emily Bray is a graduate student in animal learning at the University of Pennsylvania who's worked with Brian Hare of the Canine Cognition Center at Duke University on how dogs of different temperaments respond to intonation cues. She says that many studies have shown that a dog's behavior is affected by whether a person speaks in a friendly tone or an intimidating one. For example, dogs may understand what a pointing gesture means, but their reactions change depending on how an experimenter speaks to them.

"If you use the informative voice when you point, they go and search where you're pointing," she says. "Whereas if you say something in the imperative voice, they're more likely to just sit down, even though it's the same gesture."

It's actually not at all surprising that dogs understand our tone of voice, because, in fact, there's nothing special about the way humans convey emotion—we do it the same way as our fellow mammals. "There's this idea called Morton's Law," Bray says. "Across mammals, high-pitched tones are generally associated with affiliative behavior and low-pitched tones are associated with threatening behavior."

So when you talk that squeaky baby talk to your pet, he's probably getting exactly the affectionate message you're intending. Similarly, animals (including us) use short, repeated vocalizations when excited. In fact, one difference between experienced dog trainers and the rest of us is that trainers are better at using intonation to communicate effectively. □

## Do Our Pets Grieve?

by PetPav.com

We all know how hard it is to lose one of our beloved furry family members when they cross to the rainbow bridge. The mourning and sadness we feel is profound and we never forget our pets but learn how to cope with the grief. However, what happens when our pets outlive us? Do our pets grieve for their owners?

Studies show that both cats and dogs sense the loss of another pet, especially if they were close friends. Cats can usually deal with the grief more readily and/or just don't show the loss as readily. Pets may also show signs of loss and mourning in ways that the remaining family or caretaker may not recognize. Although somewhat different, dogs do feel the loss of loved ones. Many dogs have a significant degree of attachment to their owner that leads to anxiety and distress when even short-term separation such as a vacation occurs and therefore the loss can be felt deeply.

### Do all dogs feel the loss of their owner?

Dogs who are extremely attached to their owner and have a sense of separation anxiety are likely to be hit hard following their owners passing. Some of the signs of these types of dogs are when the following has occurred in the past: bark, whine or howl immediately after you leave, exhibit destructive behavior in ↗

("Do Our Pets Grieve?" cont.)

your absence (and often directed toward doors and windows); house soiling when you are away and/or depression when you go for a short trip.

While we can't ask a dog how he feels, we can (and do) sometimes see all the visible signs of depression in grieving dogs that we see in a recently bereaved or an otherwise depressed person. Dogs that are mourning will be unenthusiastic and lethargic, mope, eat less, become anti-social, sleep more or sometimes show the opposite spectrum and are restless. Most dogs will lose weight and mope. The signs are not that different than a human in mourning.

### Dogs, like people, will usually get over their depression in time:

As time goes on, dogs like humans, will become less depressed over time. It can last a few months and sometimes even longer depending on the bond of the dog with his owner.

### Below are some recommendations on how a new caretaker can help our dogs get through the loss of a loved one:

Allow time to heal the wounds and merely be supportive and loving to our dogs. Make sure the grieving dog continues to eat and drink, even if this means helping the dog eat his favorite foods. Keep the dog on the same amount of food and maybe extra treats. Spoil the dog!

If possible, try to have the dog with you or the new caretaker during the daytime and at night. Have the dog sleep in the bedroom with his caretaker or new family so he can have a new sense of belonging.

Provide distractions during the day such as toys, delicious food treats, games, daily walks so that the dog is gainfully entertained. Some coaxing may be necessary to get the dog off the couch and up!

Try to interest the dog in interacting with people or dogs. Sometimes a visitor dog to the house will stimulate the affected dog's appetite and activity to help get over the grief.

Daily exercise is extremely important as it has a calming, soothing and mood elevating effect. Aerobic (running) exercise is best if this can be done to get the dog's happiness level back up.

Medication, as a last resort, must be prescribed by a veterinarian and only when the anxiety is too severe for a dog to handle.

### A dog's grief is proportional to the bond with the owner:

As much as we love our dogs, their separation anxiety and grief is directly proportional to the strength of the bond with us and is a function of the dog's reliance and dependence on us. Owners who feed into a dog's intense dependence on them are more likely to have dogs that do not cope well when left alone for any reason. The emotional pain dogs feel on their owners death is an extension of, an extreme version of separation anxiety. It isn't recommended that you detach yourself to your



("Do Our Pets Grieve?" cont.)

dog, but try to make it healthy. If they are independent, your dogs will be better suited to deal with all kinds of separation anxiety, even just leaving them for the day.

#### Think of your pets as your kids:

If you have friends or family that take care of your dog or dogs when you are away, have a plan in case something happens to you. We want to make sure that our dogs or even cats are left in good hands with a home that will love them. We spend so much time with our pets and they give us so much love that we need to think ahead as to whom and how they will be cared for in our absence.

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## Why Does My Dog Sniff Only Certain People?

by Dr. Mary Fuller



When your dog seems particularly interested in one person's scent, is he smelling other animals on the person? Or is it something else?

We've all been there: when walking down the street, our pooch will suddenly be very interested in investigating a random stranger, but a minute later, the same dog is uninterested in the human who wants to pet him. And so it goes with visitors to the house, people at the vet's office and other dog owners at the park. And it often seems as if there is no rhyme or reason as to why a dog can't resist sniffing one person but ignores another.

#### So what's going on? Here are a few theories:

##### 1. The Dog Is Just Saying "Hi" —

When you entertain guests, does your dog make a beeline for one guest in particular? Does his nose sweep back and forth like a vacuum nozzle and not always in the most, ahem, polite location? If so, your dog is using his nose to get acquainted. And just as you're drawn to certain people because they're more interesting, some people are more fascinating to your dog from a scent standpoint than others are.

Instead of trotting out the usual introductory queries like, "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" and "What do you do for a living?" dogs can, with a single whiff, unearth very personal information about someone. They may be able to detect, for example, what a person had for lunch hours ago or that someone owns three cats, two dogs and walked in the woods yesterday.

In fact, according to Alexandra Horowitz, a canine cognition specialist at Barnard College and author of *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell and Know*, a dog's sense of smell is so discriminating that it could detect a teaspoon of sugar in a million gallons of water. ➤

("Why Does My Dog Sniff Only Certain People?" cont.)

So depending on what appeals to your dog, he could simply be drawn to the smell of someone's cat or dog on that person's clothes, or it may be that, on some undetectable-to-you level, the person smells like his favorite treat.

##### 2. The Dog Smells Fear —

Some dogs have a knack for sidling up to the people who are most fearful of dogs. Is it something in the way these people smell? Maybe. It could be that fear causes people to sweat a bit more, and dogs pick up on that scent, but they're probably also reading subtleties in a person's body language. Or it may be a combination of the two that seems to attract your dog to the people who least want his attention.

##### 3. The Dog Is Just Happy to See Someone —

New research shows there may be plenty going on inside a dog's head when he uses his nose.

In a study published in the journal *Behavioural Processes*, unsexed dogs underwent functional magnetic resonance imaging while presented with five scents: a familiar human, an unfamiliar human, a familiar dog, a strange dog and the dog's own odor. The results? The area of the brain associated with pleasure lit up most when the dog was presented with the scent of a familiar human. And even in the absence of the familiar person, dogs were able not only to distinguish that person's scent, but also had positive associations with it.

The bottom line? Even if we don't know exactly what the average dog is focusing on as he says hello to people on the street, he clearly knows what he likes—and he's usually not shy about letting everyone else know, too. ☐

## Worst Fruits and Vegetables for Dogs

by Laura Cross



Fruits and veggies can be healthy and inexpensive treats or snacks for your dog, but some of these foods can be downright dangerous. The wrong snack can cause vomiting, stomach upset or worse for your canine. So before you head to the produce aisle, check out the fruits and vegetables you should never give your dog.

As always, consult with your vet before giving any new food items to your pet, especially if he has any medical problems, and keep treats and snacks of any sort to a minimum.

#### Onions, Garlic, Leeks or Chives

Onions, garlic, leeks and chives, which are all members of the *Allium* genus, can damage healthy red blood cells, leading to life-threatening anemia. Cooking these household staples won't make them any less toxic, so leave them out of your pet's diet no matter how they're prepared. ☐

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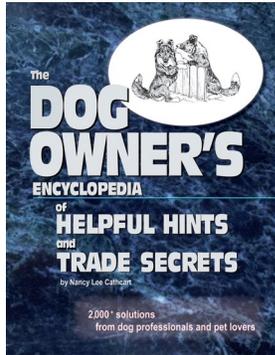
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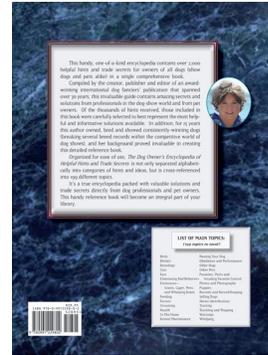


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