



Food Elimination Trial

A food elimination trial is an easy, at home and cost-effective diagnostic tool to help determine the cause of your dog's itchy skin. It is a long process, but if done correctly, can be very helpful in ruling in or out a food allergy. It is important to know that not all itchy dogs have a food allergy. Therefore, you may see no improvement with a food trial. If so, there are further tests to help determine the source of your pet's itching. This is an essential first step in a dermatologic workup for any pet.

The Basics:

- 8-12 weeks (or until clinical signs resolve) of a new, novel protein. A novel protein is a protein source your pet has NEVER had before. This can be tricky, especially with older pets. Common novel protein sources are duck, rabbit, kangaroo, fish or venison. The important thing is to make sure this is a NEW protein to your dog. The most common allergens in pet food are proteins, typically chicken, beef or cow milk and glutens.
- After the STRICT 8-12 weeks, you challenge your dog with their old diet. This "provocative diet" should be fed until the clinical signs of itching come back. This can take up to another 4-6 weeks, depending on the dog. During this time, you do not have to be strict with your dog's diet and treats.
- If there is no change in your pet on either diet, either your pet does not have a food allergy, or the protein was not eliminated during the initial elimination phase. When you hit this point, call us at Cool Springs Animal Hospital, and we can discuss the next step for your pet.

The Dos:

- Do be patient. 8-12 weeks is a long time. It can also be very frustrating to watch your dog itch without treatment.
- Do give your dog treats made up of the diet food they are already receiving. The enjoyment your dog gets from a treat is more from the fact that you are rewarding your pet. The actual treat is less important. You can have a ziploc of your pet's kibble in a bag and give them treats from that bag.

The Don'ts:

- Do not give your pet any Benadryl (or other anti-histamines) or any steroids during the food trial. These drugs can cause the trial to be misinterpreted.
- Do not give your pet any toys or bones with flavoring on them (including rawhides, Greenie treats, etc.).
- Do not let your pet get ANY table scraps or human food. Also feed your pet separately from other pets.
- Do not let your neighbors feed your dog any treats.
- Do not give up! Dermatological diseases can be frustrating, but we hope to figure out the initial cause and reduce the itching as much as possible.

Good luck with your pet's food trial! Please do not hesitate to call with any questions, comments or concerns.