



# The Southtowns Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter Prepared by the Doctors and Staff of Southtowns Animal Hospital

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## 10 Tips to Prevent Poisonings

1. Be aware of the plants you have in your house and in your pet's yard. The ingestion of azalea, oleander, sago palm, Easter lily, or yew plant material by an animal, could be fatal.
2. When cleaning your house, never allow your pet access to the area where cleaning agents are used or stored. Some cleaners may only cause a mild stomach upset, while others could cause severe burns of the tongue, mouth, and stomach.
3. When using rat or mouse bait, ant or roach traps, or snail and slugbaits, place the products in areas that are inaccessible to your animals. Most baits contain sweet smelling inert ingredients, such as jelly, peanut butter, and sugars, which can be very attractive to your pet.
4. Never change dosages on your pets' medication unless instructed to do so by your veterinarian. Increased doses can cause problems, rather than help your pet get better faster.
5. Keep all prescription and over the counter drugs out of your pets' reach, preferably in closed cabinets. Pain killers, cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, and vitamins could be potentially lethal even in small doses. One regular strength ibuprofen (200 mg) could cause stomach ulcers in a ten-pound dog. One extra strength acetaminophen tablet (500 mg) can be fatal to a seven-pound cat.
6. Never leave chocolates unattended. Approximately one-half ounce or less of baking chocolate per pound of body weight can cause problems. Even small amounts can cause pancreatic problems.
7. Many common household items have been shown to be lethal. Items that are highly toxic include pennies because of the high concentration of zinc, and mothballs. One or two mothballs can be life threatening. Potpourri oils, fabric softener sheets, automatic dish detergents, batteries, cigarettes, coffee grounds, and alcoholic drinks are all common items that can be toxic to our pets.
8. All automotive products such as oil, gasoline, and antifreeze, should be stored in areas away from pet access. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze (ethylene glycol) can be deadly in a seven-pound cat and less than one tablespoon could be lethal to a 20 pound dog.
9. Always follow label instructions when using flea products. When a product is labeled "for use in dogs only" this means that the product should NEVER be applied to cats or other pets.

10. When treating your lawn or garden with fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides, always keep your animals away until the area dries completely. Always store such products in an area that will ensure no possible pet exposure.

If you think your pet has come in contact with something poisonous, be sure to contact us right away at 824-4108. If at all possible, try to have the package with you when you call. If it is after our normal office hours, be sure to seek emergency help quickly. The number for the Emergency Clinic is 839-4043

The SPCA operates a 24 hour Anima Poison Control Hotline as a resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Make the call that can make all the difference: (888) 426-4435. A \$55 consultation fee applies.



### **Proper Restraint For Safety—A Message from Doctor Winkle**

Going to the doctor is stressful to everyone. The different smells and equipment of a medical office can be frightening, even to people who understand why they are there.

Our pets don't understand that we are here to help them stay well, and to help them get better when they are sick. Because of this stress, even the most docile kitty or well behaved dog can act unpredictably at the animal hospital.

For your pet's comfort, as well as the comfort and safety of all our patients, it is important that all animals be kept under proper restraint.

For dogs, this means a properly fitting collar and a leash. A plain leash is preferred to one of the "expanding" leashes. It is easier to control a frightened or excited dog when he is kept close to you.

For our feline patients a sturdy carrier of some type is essential. Not only do they feel more secure in a carrier, but they won't attract the attention of a curious or frightened dog.

We have leashes available to borrow, if needed, and we have inexpensive carriers if you should need one for your cat.

Our staff wanted to bring this matter to your attention while we are remodeling. In addition to the usual stresses of a doctor visit, the unusual sounds of construction can add to a pet's anxiety.

Our goal is to keep the office as stress-free as possible for all of our patients.

**Prevent This:**



**With This:**



**For only This:**

**\$8.67**



## **Allergies Are Nothing To Sneeze At**

Is your cat grooming half her hair off or your dog licking his paws raw? It may well be your pet is experiencing allergies, one of the most common health problems for pets. Just like people, animals have allergic reactions because their immune system overreacts to some material. Almost anything can set off an alarm in the immune system, causing it to pump out large amounts of white blood cells, hormones, and other materials called histamines into the bloodstream. The result for animals can be a range of different effects, including itchy, swollen skin, difficulty breathing, or a disruption of the digestive tract. These symptoms are the animal equivalent of a person's sneezing, runny nose, and watery eyes.

Pets with these kinds of allergic symptoms can be pretty miserable creatures, and unfortunately they can't be cured. Allergies are life-long problems. The best way to start helping your pet feel better is to find out what your pet is allergic to, so you can keep the allergen out of his environment. Animal allergies generally fall under one of four main categories.



### **CONTACT ALLERGIES**

These are the least common types of allergies in animals. They happen when an animal's skin comes in contact with the material he is allergic to. The chemicals in flea collars can cause this problem as well. The skin at the point of contact will be irritated. It may itch, become thickened, discolored, have a strong odor, and lose hair due to constant biting or scratching. Contact allergies are generally not a hard problem to solve--they're usually confined to a specific area of an animal's body, and it shouldn't take too much work to discover the allergen.



### **FOOD ALLERGIES**

Diet can be a complicated factor in pet allergies. Most animals are not born with allergies; their immune systems develop an allergic response over time to some part of their diet, often one of the animal proteins. Food allergies can be a real challenge to solve. You may have to keep your furry friend on a special hypoallergenic (non-allergy-causing) diet for eight to twelve weeks because the allergic effects of food can stay in the system for eight weeks. While you're feeding these test diets, you'll have to make very sure that your pet doesn't eat any treats, vitamins, leftovers, scraps, or even plants around the house. He has to eat the test diet exclusively for the entire eight to twelve weeks.



### **INHALANT ALLERGIES**

Inhalant allergies are the kind we humans are most used to. Just like us, our pets get hay fever, meaning they can be allergic to pollen and mold. They can also be allergic to the dust mites, mildew, and mold that can be indoors. These kinds of allergens usually produce severe itching in the ears, feet, groin, and armpits. Dogs in particular may develop hairless, irritated "hot spots" from constantly chewing on and scratching the affected skin. Most animals that are allergic to airborne particles are usually allergic to more than one. Often, they will only experience itching during the pollen-heavy seasons of the year, just like humans with hay fever. If you find that your pet's allergies seem to be seasonal, you may be able to limit his outdoor time during allergy season.



### **FLEA ALLERGIES**

This is an extremely common problem for pets, possibly the most common allergy of all. Animals aren't actually allergic to the fleas themselves, but to proteins that fleas secrete in their saliva when they bite. Your pet doesn't have to be a walking flea circus to suffer from an allergy, either. Affected animals can itch severely from a single bite for over five days! So, if your pet is allergic to fleas, you're going to have to work very hard to keep the little pests away. Advantage monthly flea treatments are perfect for allergic pets because it kills fleas on contact, rather than after they bite.

What makes allergies hard to deal with is that in many cases, you either won't be able to determine exactly what is causing the reaction or won't be able to remove it from your pet's environment. This is where your veterinarian comes into the picture. You and your veterinarian will probably have to work together to determine the best treatment, or combination of treatments, for your pet's allergy. You may have to go through a lot of trial and error to come up with a treatment plan for your pet.

**TESTING**--Your veterinarian has a few different tools to help determine the source of your pet's allergy. Intradermal or "scratch" tests involve making small abrasions in an animal's skin and inserting small amounts of materials that the pet might be allergic to. There are also a number of blood tests that analyze the amount of certain chemicals the immune system releases into the bloodstream when exposed to different allergens. These tests can be used to tell whether your pet is having an allergic reaction or whether the problem is caused by something else.

**STEROIDS**--These drugs work to suppress the immune system and make the allergic reaction less severe. Steroid treatment can help your pet even if you can't determine what he's allergic to or how he's being exposed. They can have several side effects, however, and they are generally used if the allergy occurs for a short amount of time, because long-term use makes animals more prone to infection, as well as susceptible to diabetes.

**IMMUNOTHERAPY**-- can be an effective way to treat allergies, but it also takes the longest amount of time to work. In immunotherapy, animals are given regular--often weekly--vaccinations that contain small amounts of the substance they're allergic to, like human allergy shots. Unfortunately, it takes some time for the immune system to readjust. It can sometimes be six to twelve months before animals show any improvement from the treatment. However, immunotherapy is able to effect a cure in 50 to 70 percent of cases, unlike other treatments, which only alleviate symptoms.

**ANTI-HISTAMINES**--These drugs, much like the allergy medication people take, work to block the chemicals released by the immune system, called histamines. They are effective at reducing itching and inflammation, and they are relatively safe to use. Their major drawback is that they cause sedation, and can make pets extremely drowsy and sluggish.

**TOPICALS**--These are medications applied directly to the skin. We have a wide range of medicated shampoos and lotions available to help soothe itching skin. Some contain topical steroids, others contain soothing things like oatmeal.

**DIET**-- changing, eliminating, or adding things to your pet's diet may also be beneficial. Certain fatty acids can help with certain skin allergies, and there are specially compounded reduced allergen foods available.

Whatever treatment decision you and your veterinarian come to, rest assured that the patience and determination it can take to treat allergies is well worth it. Often, two or more therapies are used to achieve the best results. Though it may take some time and effort, you can help your itchy, grouchy pet feel comfortable again.



## Things That Get Under The Skin

Dogs and cats suffer from many problems which effect their skin. It is important to understand that the skin is an organ, just as the liver and kidneys are organs. The skin functions as a barrier to protect the body from infection, ultra violet light and dehydration. Good health and proper function of the skin is dependent on the health and function of the other organs which make up our pets bodies.

Diseases which effect the skin can be placed into one of two categories: primary and secondary skin disease. Primary skin diseases are those which effect the skin directly, such as mange or fleas. Secondary diseases first involve other organs and then effect the skin, such as hypothyroidism.

The diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases can be difficult and time consuming. The following are some of the common diseases and conditions effecting the skin and a brief description of their diagnosis and treatments.

**BACTERIAL INFECTION:** bacterial infection is common, but is usually secondary to another underlying disease such as an allergy. Treatment for bacterial infections, called pyodermas, may include antibiotics. It is important to seek professional help to treat the bacterial infection while searching for the underlying disease.

**HOT SPOTS OR ACUTE MOIST DERMATITIS:** Hot spots are usually a result of self trauma and resulting infection that occurs as your pet tries to relieve itself from some pain or itch. Treatment includes thorough cleaning, topical and

systemic antibiotics, and anti-inflammatory agents. Pyodermas vary in severity. Treatment is similar to that for hot spots, but typically is longer term. Shampoos and rinses are also helpful.

**ECTOPARASITES** (external parasites): include mites, fleas, and ticks. These parasites break the barrier formed by the skin and allow bacterial infections to occur. They also may lead to allergic conditions. Diagnosis is achieved with gross observation and microscopic examination of skin scrapings. Treatment depends on the parasites present and include antiparasitic drugs and antiparasitic shampoos and rinses.

**FUNGAL INFECTIONS:** can be ringworm (Dermatophytosis) or other fungi. Diagnosis is achieved by culture of the organisms, microscopic examination of skin scrapings and blood tests. Treatment includes topical and systemic antifungal drugs and antifungal shampoos and rinses.

**AUTOIMMUNE SKIN DISEASE:** There are several autoimmune skin diseases, such as lupus, and the foundation of diagnosis is surgical biopsy. Treatment includes combinations of dietary supplementation, steroids, and immune modulation drugs.

**SECONDARY SKIN DISEASE:** Diagnosis of secondary skin diseases such as hypothyroidism often requires blood tests, biopsies, and X-rays. Treatment of the underlying condition usually results in improvement of the skin problems.

### **DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT**

Your pet's skin problems very often combine two or more of the above diseases. For example, flea infestation hypersensitivity can lead to pyoderma. Because of the complicated interactions between the skin and other organs within the body and due to skin's varied response to insult, diagnosis and treatment of skin disease may be difficult and time consuming.

The skin scrape is the mainstay of diagnosis. Several small areas of your pet's skin are shaved to remove hair. A scalpel blade is used to scrape up the top layers of skin. The resulting material is viewed under a high-powered microscope. In addition to skin scrapes, blood tests and surgical biopsies are necessary to diagnose some skin diseases.

Treatment of skin disease may include steroids, antibiotics, antihistamines, topical drugs, antifungal drugs, shampoos and rinses and dietary supplementation or modification and surgical removal of masses. In some cases, therapy must be continued for months and even for life.



**Heartworm season is here.  
Be sure your dog is tested, and taking his  
Interceptor every month.**