

Diet Trial Options

A diet trial can be a way to discern if your pet's allergy symptoms are coming from a food allergy vs. from the environment. Keep in mind, only about 1 in 5 dogs with allergies have a food allergy. When embarking on a diet trial you have two options - trying a novel protein diet or a hydrolyzed protein diet. For both diet trials you would feed ONLY the new food for 6-8 weeks straight - no treats, no human food, nothing else - then reevaluate their allergies at the end of that time period to decide if the food improved their symptoms or not. Here's the in's and out's of the two options:

1. A novel protein diet trial is one in which you would go out into the market and find a food that has a protein source you are sure your pet has never tried before. This could be something as simple as turkey, salmon, or venison but there are also some wilder ones out there such as alligator or kangaroo. Be sure to check the labels carefully - sometimes the main protein is highlighted but other proteins could be included in the ingredient list. The benefit of the novel protein diet trial is that it tends to be less expensive than the hydrolyzed diet. The caveat is that if it doesn't work, it doesn't necessarily mean your pet does not have a protein allergy as they could be allergic to the new protein you're trying as well. Thus, this method can require a bit of trial and error.
2. A hydrolyzed protein diet trial is one in which you buy prescription food through us. We primarily use Royal Canin's "Ultamino" for this, but have a few other options as well. When a protein is hydrolyzed it is essentially broken down into almost its basic amino acids. This helps stop the body's ability to recognize the protein, thus the body does not react to it as an allergen and it reduces or eliminates your pet's allergy symptoms. The benefit of this diet trial is taking out the guesswork of figuring out which protein(s) your pet is allergic to, and once your pet is stable on it you can slowly start adding foods back in to see how they respond. The caveat is that it is definitely quite expensive - \$75 for a 5.5lb bag of cat food and \$142.99 for a 19.8lb bag of dog food.

One thing to keep in mind with diet trials is that on occasion pets can have both food AND environmental allergies. It's possible you may see improvement on the food trial but not full remission of allergy symptoms due to this. The best way to track how it's going is to keep a journal of your pet's allergy symptoms over time - maybe check in once a week while doing the trial and jot down a rating of their symptoms on a scale of 1-10. At the end of the trial, look at what you've written down and reevaluate how much the new diet changed their symptoms. This is great information to share with us so we can help you with next steps moving forward.