

SHAMROCK DIGEST

May/June 2011

ALLERGIC SKIN DISEASES

Allergic skin diseases in our pets can be frustrating – there is often no cure; instead we manage the disease or symptoms to provide our companions with relief. Often it is difficult to determine the exact disease and this adds to the frustration for both the veterinarian and the caregiver. Some pets may be afflicted with more than one condition, and this complicates the problem.

The three main allergic skin diseases in our area are flea allergy dermatitis (FAD for short), atopy (or environmental allergies), and food allergies.

Animals with FAD can experience severe itchiness and hair loss after being exposed to the saliva from only one flea. Although hair loss can occur anywhere, the ‘classic’ appearance of a pet with FAD is loss of hair along the back starting at the tail base. FAD is not related to how many fleas that your pet may or may not have. We live in a temperate zone where fleas are active year round, therefore the best control for FAD is to maintain all pets in the household on a year round flea adulticide.

Atopy is the pet equivalent to hay fever. The animal develops sensitivities to allergens that are inhaled or that it comes into physical contact with. Pollens, detergents, and straw or cedar bedding are all examples of substances that commonly cause atopy. Atopy caused by inhalation often causes itchiness and rashes at certain times of the year. Atopy related to direct skin contact (contact allergies) often occurs on specific areas of the body. Atopy is

managed with the use of antihistamines and avoidance of known allergy sources.

Food allergies often show as skin problems in cats and dogs. Food allergies or intolerances can become a problem at any age as pets can develop allergies to foods they have been eating their entire lives, be it kibble, homemade, or raw. Generally the allergy is to a protein or carbohydrate source; however the body can become sensitized to any ingredient in the diet.

There are no good or bad food ingredients when it comes to food allergies. An example in humans is strawberries – if you aren’t allergic to them, they are great! What this means is that a hypoallergenic food is any diet that contains protein and carbohydrate sources the pet has not been exposed to before.



There are diets for our companions made with duck, venison, catfish, rabbit, pheasant and even kangaroo! Alternate carbohydrate sources available include brown rice, sweet potato, peas and oatmeal. Some diets even have the protein and carbohydrate molecules broken into fragments too small for the immune system to recognize.

Although determining the source of food allergies can be a long and difficult journey, food allergies can be treated successfully once the allergens in the food are determined and avoided.

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COMFORTIS

We are stocking a 'new' flea control product for dogs at Shamrock and here are some of the details:

- Comfortis is a pill that starts killing fleas within thirty minutes of being ingested, and all fleas on the dog will die within four hours. It effectively kills fleas for one month.
- Comfortis won't wash off with frequent bathing or swimming, and the artificial beef flavour makes it easy to administer.
- Comfortis is safe to use with heartworm medications, vaccinations, and most other medications
- the active ingredient in Comfortis is spinosad which is licensed for use in organic farming.

Of course nothing is perfect, and Comfortis is no different. Here are the downsides:

- it needs to be given with a full meal, and up to 10% of dogs may vomit with the first dose, a number that declines with subsequent doses.
- Comfortis is not for use with pregnant dogs or for puppies less than 14 weeks old. It is not recommended for dogs that suffer seizures.

So, is Comfortis the new magic flea pill? Unfortunately there is no such thing. However, Comfortis has some definite benefits and is worthy of consideration if you are having flea troubles or don't want to use topical flea control.

CLINIC CLOSURES

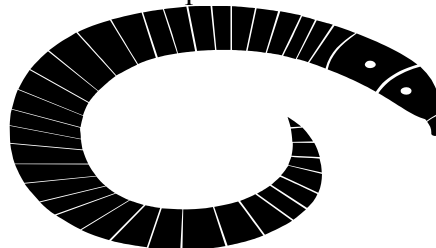
We will be closed for the Victoria Day weekend in May. Regular hours resume on Tuesday May 24th.

PROFENDER

We are now carrying a topical dewormer specifically for our feline patients.

Anyone who has struggled to deworm their cat every 3 months with a pill knows that our feline companions can turn into little tigers! Pill pockets have been a great help for many feline caregivers, but there are some cats that just won't take any pill, even the disguised ones.

Profender is used the same as Advantage - a small amount of liquid is applied to the skin at the base of the neck. The active ingredients in Profender absorb through the skin and into the bloodstream. The blood carries the drugs to the intestinal tract where they act on the parasites. Profender works against many stages of three primary worm types - roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm.



Profender is a great alternative to Milbemax, our usual tablet dewormer for cats and it can be used on all cats over the age of 8 weeks as long as they weigh more than 0.5kg.

Although not for everyone, Profender might be a great alternative for you and your feline companion.

DID YOU READ THIS?

We are having a contest to see how many of our clients read our newsletters.

If you submit your name and phone number to the office, either in writing or by phone, you will be entered to win a medium sized bag of cat or dog food from Shamrock.