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New Relief for Dogs with Allergies

Seasonal allergies, which are known as Atopy, are a common source of itch and suffering for many dogs. There are many triggers for seasonal allergies, but common ones are house dust mites, tree pollen in Spring, and grass pollen (ragweed) in Fall. Signs that your pet suffers from allergies may include redness of the skin, hair loss, crusting and scaling of the skin, dark black thickened skin as well as constant itching, scratching and licking. Pets will also develop secondary skin and ear infections that make the itching even worse for them. Areas that are affected the worst are often paws and the thin haired area of the abdomen, however, anywhere on the body can be affected.

Allergy Treatments

There are many treatments for allergies. In the past, prednisone was one of the few medications that would help control the itch quickly for severe itching from allergies. In addition, for many pets this medication causes unwanted side effects such as increased drinking, increased urination and increased hunger. Even though the skin would heal, during the use of prednisone, pet owners would be frustrated with pets having urine accidents in the house and trying to eat anything they could find. These side effects are more severe at higher doses when treatment is first started. Other treatments such as immunotherapy and Atopica can take weeks to months to work and have a higher cost, especially in large dogs.

Apoquel-A New Treatment for Allergies

In 2014, Zoetis, which is a veterinary drug manufacturer, launched a new dog allergy medication called Apoquel. Apoquel is a tablet that is given twice per day for 2 weeks, and then once per day thereafter. This medication acts quickly and provides relief within four hours. It is safe to stop and start, unlike prednisone that requires a gradual tapering when stopping the medication. Apoquel is safe for long term use all year round, or can be used during a certain season when the pet is suffering from allergies. This medication does not have the unwanted side effects that are seen with prednisone. The most common side effects listed by the manufacturer are vomiting and diarrhea. At ZimmVet, we monitor all pets very closely, and work with the owners to determine treatment plans. The pets we have treated with Apoquel have not had any side effects.

How Does Apoquel Work?

Apoquel is a selective inhibitor of JAK1 and JAK3 enzymes—proteins important in signaling a pathway that results in itching and inflammation. JAKs were discovered in the late 1980s by an Australian chemist who isolated two kinase molecules. He named the two “JAK’s” (“just another kinase”). By inhibiting these enzymes, cytokines that result in inflammation and itching during an allergy are halted.

Where do I get Apoquel for my Dog?

Apoquel is a prescription medication available from your veterinarian. Since it is one of the only forms of allergy symptom control that works with the least amount of side effects, the medication is in high demand. Veterinarians are only able to purchase small amounts of the medication at a time, some veterinary clinics are not able to purchase the medication at all. Since ZimmVet was one of the first clinics to prescribe this medication, we have been able to get a steady supply to treat our most severely affected patients. We are now able to obtain more medication and expand treatment to more pets in need. The first step to getting your dog on treatment, is to check with your veterinarian on their current medication supply. The next step is to set up an appointment for a physical examination of your dog to determine, if this is the best medication for them.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.