



CAYMAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Allergies

The skin is the largest organ of the body. Its major function is to protect the rest of the body from the external environment. With its sweat glands and rich blood supply, it is also responsible for regulating the body's temperature.

The exterior portion of the skin is called keratin. In animals, this protective waterproofing layer is thickest on the paw pads. Under the keratin layer are the epidermal cells. These cells are constantly dividing, as new cells replace damaged older cells. The keratin layer and the epithelial cells are the body's first line of defense against invading microorganisms and hazardous environmental substances. These layers are also responsible for keeping moisture inside the body, preventing the body from dehydrating.

Like humans, animals have allergies. Some allergies are seasonal while others occur year round. In the northern parts of the U.S., flea allergies are commonly seen in the summer and fall. In the southern states, flea allergies often occur throughout the year. Food allergies are not seasonal. They can occur anytime during the year. The most common types of allergies in pets (particularly dogs) include: contact allergies, flea allergies, atopy, and food allergies



Dog with Allergy - Scratching!

Scratching is the most common symptom of allergies in pets. Some animals scratch so much that they mutilate themselves. It is not unusual to see an allergic dog with large skin wounds and areas devoid of fur called pyotraumatic dermatitis or "hot spots". Once the skin is injured, the animal is susceptible to a serious bacterial infection. It becomes a vicious cycle unless addressed by a veterinarian.

There are many ways to treat allergies in pets. Food allergies can be treated with hypoallergenic diets. Certain animals respond favorably to desensitization. Unfortunately, in most cases, allergies are extremely difficult to treat and require medication. This medication should only be dispensed by a veterinarian.

Modern veterinary medicine ... Old fashioned care