



Acton Animal Hospital
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Pet Care News

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New Allergy Medicine for Itchy Dogs

A newer drug called Atopica is gaining momentum for the treatment of itchy dogs who suffer from airborne allergens. Atopica provides an alternative to treatment using Prednisone and fewer side-effects are observed in patients needing long-term treatment.

Prednisone has been the most effective drug for allergic dermatitis, but can lead to problems with organ function, muscle atrophy, weakness, and immune suppression with constant or very long term use. Prednisone can also cause excessive panting and increased thirst and urination. Treatment with antihistamines may give some relief from itching, but they can be ineffective in many severe cases of airborne allergy.

Atopica's most common side-effect may be occasional gastrointestinal upset noted after the first few doses are given. The disadvantage of Atopica is the higher cost per tablet when compared to Prednisone or to antihistamines. However, if the total cost for treating a patient with severely itchy skin is considered over a longer time period, treatment with Atopica may actually be more comparable in cost.

Degenerative Joint Disease

Arthritis, or degenerative joint disease (DJD), is a common problem for our older pets. DJD may occur due to injury, or be secondary to a congenital joint abnormality such as hip or elbow dysplasia. Symptoms include limping, stiffness, difficulty going up or down stairs, or jumping into the car. Radiographs are usually required to confirm the diagnosis of DJD.



Several things can help alleviate the discomfort caused by DJD. The single most important treatment is maintaining a healthy body weight for your pet. Overweight animals experience significantly more stress on affected joints. Losing those five to ten extra pounds can relieve your pet's pain.

Glucosamine / Chondroitin supplements help to increase the lubrication of the joints and slow the progress of degeneration. Anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) are available to treat more serious pain.

In most cases, a combination of moderate exercise, weight management, supplements, and medications can help keep your pet comfortable and active.

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Autumn Pet Hazards



- **Antifreeze** (ethylene glycol) is highly toxic and has a sweet taste which attracts pets to lick it. As little as a few teaspoons can cause kidney failure leading to death. Prevent ingestion by cleaning up promptly any spills or leaks from your vehicle in your garage or driveway.
- **Rodenticides** are very toxic and can lead to death in pets. As field mice seek shelter in our homes during the cooler weather, some homeowners may choose to fight back the invasion with rodenticide products. If your pet ingests the rodenticide bait or a rodent that has died from it, it may lead to interference with your pet's clotting mechanisms causing internal bleeding. If you must use these products, place them where pets cannot access them.
- **Chocolate** candy and baking ingredients contain caffeine and the substance, theobromine, which can cause your pet's heart to have arrhythmias leading to heart failure. The darker the chocolate, the greater levels of these potentially toxic substances. Safeguard your pet by storing candy and baking supplies safely away from curious noses and mouths.
- **Cold weather** may present problems for indoor pets that are not acclimated to colder temperatures. Hypothermia, frostbite, and paw irritation from ice or salt are problems an indoor pet may encounter if left outdoors for extended periods. Limit the time your pet is outside to reasonable exposure periods. Wash off any salt from the footpads if walking over salted or sanded surfaces.



Poison Ivy

The rash typically seen in humans exposed to the oils from the poison ivy plant is not seen in pets. However, your pet can transfer the poison ivy oils from his haircoat to your skin. The best prevention to avoid human exposure is to keep your pet away from outdoor areas where it grows. If your pet may be exposed to the poison ivy plants, washing your pet with a pet shampoo will help to remove the offending oils.

Cuterebra

What? Cuterebra is a type of fly larvae which can hatch immediately from the egg stage after your pet rubs against a rabbit or rodent burrow or run. The newly hatched tiny larvae crawls on your pet's haircoat and finds a way into your pet, then migrates to the skin and attempts to exit through a hole in the skin's surface. Owners will notice a lump has developed on their pet's body. On closer inspection, an opening can be seen in the skin's surface over the lump. Bloody discharge may also be seen leaking from this abscess. You may be able to visualize the now larger Cuterebra larva inside the lump. Care should be taken not to rupture open the larva since it could cause an allergic reaction in your pet. Contact your veterinarian to assist your pet for the larva's removal. It will continue to cause an abscess until it is removed. Luckily, this is a problem only seen in late summer and early autumn.
