

Food Challenges

How to determine exactly which food your pet is allergic to

For pets that improve on a diet trial (limited ingredients or a hydrolyzed protein diet) the next step is to confirm that there is a food allergy and to determine exactly which foods they are sensitive to. The only way to do this is evocative or challenge testing. You have two choices to make before proceeding with this process.

If you are happy to continue with the strictly limited diet of only the hypoallergenic food used during the diet trial:

1. It is best to challenge using the food the pet was on prior to the start of the diet trial. For the next 2 days, mix half the old food with the current diet. Watch your pet carefully. If there is a true food allergy, there will be an increase in redness and itching within 24 – 48 hours. This confirms that there is a food allergy, and that you should go back to feeding the hypoallergenic diet. Increased redness and itching usually take about 7 – 14 days to fully subside. If there is no worsening of skin disease, then your pet doesn't have a food allergy. The improvement in symptoms could be due to other factors (seasonal change, indoor allergens, control of secondary infections, etc) and you can likely feed whatever diet and treats you like.

If you want to expand your pet's dietary palette, pinpoint specific allergies or are interested in switching to another diet:

2. You need to determine exactly which protein source(s) your pet is allergic to. Most pets react to 1 or 2 proteins; however your pet could react to more. We have to sequentially challenge with single ingredients while continuing to feed the hypoallergenic diet. One new ingredient is introduced each week by adding a small amount (2-3 tablespoons) to each meal for 2 – 4 days. When challenging, watch for increased redness of the skin, ears or itching. If there is an allergy, you should usually notice worsening in 24 – 48 hours. You MUST wait for any increased signs to resolve before going on to the next ingredient. This can take up to 7 – 14 days of continuing the hypoallergenic diet. For other single ingredient challenges use ingredients that are common in pet foods, chews, flavored medications and snacks: Depending on your pet and preferences, other good options to try would be: Lamb, Salmon, Bison or Pork.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Ingredient</u>	<u>Reaction</u>
1	Beef – Cooked plain ground beef	N – Y _____
2	Corn – Canned corn	N – Y _____
3	Egg – Plain cooked egg	N – Y _____
4	Wheat – Wheaties cereal or wheat thins	N – Y _____
5	Chicken – Cooked plain chicken	N – Y _____
6	Rice – Cooked white or brown rice	N – Y _____
7	Soy – plain tofu	N – Y _____
8	Dairy – Plain unflavored yogurt or low fat cottage cheese	N – Y _____
9	_____	N – Y _____
10	_____	N – Y _____
11	_____	N – Y _____
12	_____	N – Y _____
13	_____	N – Y _____