



FOOD CHALLENGE

After the elimination period, if there is improvement, then we wean off most anti-itch medications in preparation for a food challenge. This involves slowly introducing the old food and treats in a very measured way to determine which one causes itch or inflammation of the skin.

FIRST

For 10-14 days, slowly transition (similar to initial switchover) from the prescription food trial diet to the original (old) diet. Some food allergic pets will react almost immediately (within 1 to 2 hours); others may take several days (up to 2 weeks) to react. If a reaction (GI or skin) is noted, then go back to the special diet (exclusively) until symptoms abate. This usually takes 3 to 7 days. If symptoms are severe, then contact the dermatologist for further instructions.

If your pet does not react to the food challenge, then we may consider challenging with 1-2 additional proteins (see next section). However, this may mean that your pet may not be food allergic, and further workup of other diseases may be warranted. If your pet reacts to the food challenge, then your pet is likely food allergic. Long-term maintenance food options include: staying on the prescription diet, choosing an over-the-counter diet similar to the prescription diet (ex. Natural Balance), or challenging with additional proteins to eventually find an alternate over-the-counter diet (see next section).

NEXT (IF NEEDED)

In order to identify the offending ingredient(s), you must introduce the foods listed below, one at a time, and feed each for 10-14 consecutive days. If a reaction is noted to a specific ingredient (usually a return of the symptoms seen prior to the special food elimination diet), then you should immediately discontinue feeding that ingredient.

Similar to above, some pets will react to a food item almost immediately (within 1 to 2 hours); others may take several days (up to 2 weeks) to react. If a reaction is noted, then go back to the special diet (exclusively) until symptoms abate. This usually takes 3 to 7 days. Once the pet returns to "normal," the next ingredient is started. Keep a written record of which ingredients your pet tolerates and which he/she does not.

At the end, you will have a list of "good" and "bad" ingredients for your pet. Discuss the results with your pet's dermatologist and decide on a long-term diet plan. There may be commercial foods that your pet will tolerate (which do not contain the "bad" ingredients). Once such a food is found, and the pet is able to tolerate it for at least one month, it is likely that the food can be fed safely for the life of your pet (if it is a balanced diet).



TESTING INGREDIENTS

1. Cooked ground beef 1/2 cup/day
2. Cooked chicken 1/2 cup/day
3. Cottage or other cheese 1/2 cup/day
4. Soy 1/2 cup/day (tofu)
5. Cooked lamb 1/2 cup/day
6. Hard boiled eggs 1/2 cup/day
7. Wheat 1/2 cup/day (wheat pasta, germ, cereal)
8. Corn 1/2 cup/day (whole, frozen, or canned)
9. Cooked port 1/2 cup/day