



# Navarro Small Animal Clinic

*Where friends are family and family is first.*

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[www.navarrosmallanimalclinic.com](http://www.navarrosmallanimalclinic.com)

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## Food Allergies

Food allergies are a fairly common issue with pet. This issue actually accounts for approximately 20% of itching and scratching in dogs. Food allergies can affect both dogs and cats, however it is not as common in cats. Males and females are equally affected. Allergies can occur in dogs as young as five months, as well as dogs over ten. The most common culprit of food allergies is protein, with chicken and beef being the most frequent cause.

The symptoms of food allergies are similar to those of most allergies seen in dogs and cats. The primary symptom is itchy skin affecting primarily the face, feet, ears, forelegs, armpits and the area around the anus. Symptoms may also include chronic or recurrent ear infections, hair loss, excessive scratching, hot spots, and skin infections that respond to antibiotics but reoccur after antibiotics are discontinued. Due to the fact that many other problems can cause similar symptoms and that many times animals are suffering from more problems than just food allergies, it is very important that all other problems are properly identified and treated prior to undergoing diagnosis for food allergies.

A food allergy often develops after your pet has been eating the exact same food for one year or more. Unlike humans who immediately swell or itch after eating a food they are allergic to; a dog actually develops the allergy to the food. The allergy usually stems from the main source of protein in the food. Some animals are allergic to a variety of ingredients in the food, including soy, milk, eggs, etc.

## Food Trial

The best way to determine if your pet is truly suffering from a food allergy is by running a food trial; however this can be a tedious process.

- You and your vet need to pick a food with a **novel protein source (rabbit, venison, duck, kangaroo)** that your pet has not eaten before and stay on **ONLY** that food for **at least 3 months**.
- That means no treats, rawhides, toothpastes or flavored medications during this food trial.

Some medications like steroids and anti-histamines can be used to ease the irritation at the beginning of the trial.

Many pets that develop a food allergy will often develop more over time. If you have switched to venison for a couple of years and then start getting the same symptoms, you will probably have to then switch to duck. Don't worry, not every dog has to continually switch and even if you do, there are plenty of novel protein foods to choose from.