

Blue Ravine News

YOUR PET'S HEALTH IS OUR CONCERN

Volume 21 Issue 3

August 2024

Staff

Jennifer Sweet, DVM
 Cristina Finocchio, DVM
 Kristina Jackson, DVM
 Jessica Winters, DVM
 Laura Rotz, DVM
 Andrew Connors, DVM
 Nicole Fitzgerald, DVM
 Katherine Schwartz, RVT
 Practice Manager
 Patti Rungo
 Office Manager/CSR
 Lauren Wintroub, CSR Supervisor
 Michelle Ippoliti, CSR
 Ann Nicewander, CSR
 Jennifer Lofquist, CSR
 Mylee Melgazo, CSR
 Bobbie Edwards, CSR
 Andrea Gavin, Surgical Super, RVT
 Tami Russell, RVT, Tech. Supervisor
 Ellie Pearson, RVT
 Sarah Goetting, RVT
 Katie Montague, Vet Ass't.
 Lia Finocchio, Rx. Ass't.
 Kendra Harris, Lead Vet Ass't.
 Catarina Miramontes, Vet Ass't.
 Danielle Harter, Vet Ass't.
 Liberty Rivera, Vet Ass't.
 Danielle Rashid, Vet Ass't.
 Marina Neill, Vet Ass't.
 Rachel Johnson, Vet Ass't.
 Allie Gilly, Vet Ass't.
 Emily Rahman, Vet Ass't.
 Annabella Escobedo, Vet. Ass't.
 Adrian Gutierrez, Vet. Ass't.
 Taylor Rose, Vet Ass't.
 Mathew Chung, Vet Ass't.
 Olivia Fuhs, Kennel Ass't.
 Misty Tracy, Groomer

August is Itchy Dog Month

Why is My Dog Itching?

Your dog's day might look something like this: wake up, go to the bathroom, eat and drink, scratch an itch, play with a toy, nap, and repeat! But if their routine includes a lot more scratching, there could be a reason for the itch.

While an occasional itch is a common occurrence for dogs, **frequent scratching** — along with things like scooting, excessive chewing or biting, or redness of the skin — are symptoms of skin conditions that may need medical treatment. Not only is itching an annoyance for dogs, but it can also be painful (such as pain from raw sores when moving or a prickly, crawling feeling on the skin), and lead to additional problems when left untreated.

Some Common Reasons Your Dog Might Be Itching':

- Fleas
Not only do fleas cause intense itchiness in dogs, but some dogs have an allergy to flea bites and saliva, which can cause severely inflamed and itchy skin, hair loss, scabs, and discomfort. You can protect your dog from fleas by ensuring they're on a **preventative medication** year-round.
- Environmental Allergy
Your dog may be allergic to pollen, dust mites, mold spores, grasses, and a whole host of other common environmental allergens. You might see your dog licking their paws, rubbing their face or shaking their head after time outside, along with scratching, rubbing and

hair loss on their legs, sides, and belly. Paw licking often causes brown staining and redness on the tops and bottoms of the paws. The inner ear flaps and outer ear canals can look red and irritated, and there may be a brownish ear discharge.

- Food Allergy
When your dog is allergic to their food (or even their treats), they may show this **allergic reaction** by itching their face, ears, belly, armpits, feet and scooting or licking their rear end. Ear irritation and infections are common with food allergies, too. Some affected dogs may also have digestive issues, like gas, increased number of bowel movements, or loose stools. Food allergies are typically a result of the protein(s) in their food or treats, not the grains—so going “grain-free” isn't often the answer.
- Hot Spots
These raw, inflamed areas often develop due to allergies or fleas. They can also happen after bathing or swimming, especially if the area wasn't properly dried. Constant scratching or chewing can cause an imbalance in the bacterial levels on their skin, leading to secondary staph infection, which can show as open sores, red bumps, pimples, scabs, and oozing discharge.
- Yeast Infections
When a dog has a yeast infection, their skin is often greasy, red, or thickened (“elephant skin”), and



When a dog has a yeast infection, their skin is often greasy, red, or thickened (“elephant skin”), and

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue:

August is Itchy Dog Month	1-3
Coupon — NexGard Plus	4

August is Itchy Dog Month (cont'd.)

(Continued from page 1)

has an odor. Folded areas in the ears, on the face, neck, armpits, groin and under the tail are most commonly affected. Yeast infections most often are secondary to allergies, and they are extremely itchy and uncomfortable for your dog.

- **Staph Bacterial Infections**
These usually occur when your dog has already been scratching an area to the point of inflammation and skin damage, inviting bacteria to multiply and cause an infection. Signs of a staph bacterial infection include persistent itching, skin redness, crusts/scabs, rash, or pimples. Staph infections in dogs most often are secondary to allergies or parasites but can also occur in dogs with hormonal imbalances.

If you see any of the signs of the above conditions, make an appointment to see your Blue Ravine Animal Hospital veterinarian. We will start a work up to diagnose what's causing your dog's itch and will partner with you to find the treatment that works best for you and your pet.

Prepping For Your Vet Visit

Allergic itch is actually a medical condition that affects many dogs. That's why working with your vet early on is important, since they'll be able to prescribe treatment quickly and give your dog much needed relief.

Questions your vet may ask:

- Does the itching happen often? Is it becoming more regular?
- On what part of the body does your dog scratch most?
- Is there a seasonal pattern? How long does it last? Does it last longer than when you first noticed it?
- Does it happen when your dog goes outdoors?
- Is it becoming more severe?
- Does the itch interrupt normal activities like eating, walking outdoors, playing, or sleeping?

If your dog has been scratching, scooting, or shaking more frequently, they may be suffering from an itch-inducing condition. Since itch can cause your dog unnecessary discomfort and suffering, it's important to work with your veterinarian to determine why they're itching, and the best way to help stop the itch.

There are two types of prolonged itch — seasonal and chronic (year-round).

Seasonal Itch in Dogs

Environmental allergens like mold, grass, and different types of trees don't just cause allergies in people — our dogs get them, too. For dogs, these allergies often present themselves as itch and red skin, rather than sneezing or a runny nose and eyes.

Seasonal itch happens periodically throughout the year — typically anywhere from a couple of weeks to a 2 to 3-month period of time. Your dog will usually experience itch at the same time each year.

Seasonal itch can be caused by things like an allergy to something that has a season, like ragweed (late August to mid-November) or fleas (May to November in northern climates). As the seasons change, the things causing your dog to itch (like certain types of plants) go out of season, giving your dog a temporary break from that itchy feeling.

If you think your dog may be suffering from seasonal itch, work with your veterinarian to determine the cause. Treatment may vary, but your vet will recommend an anti-itch protocol that will help manage your dog's itch. Seasonal itch can sometimes be managed with medications that work for a period of time.

Chronic Itch in Dogs

Unlike seasonal itch, chronic itching lasts continuously throughout the year. A dog with chronic itch likely has a food allergy, an allergy to something in their environment (like mold or dust mites), multiple pollen allergies in warm climates, or a flea allergy.

If you suspect your dog has chronic itch, your veterinarian can help find the cause of it. They will recommend ways to help relieve your dog's itch, like anti-itch medication, flea preventative medication, or removing certain foods from your dog's diet.

Dogs can also have seasonal flare-ups on top of their chronic itch symptoms. When this happens, be sure to ask your veterinarian about other things they can do, such as adding anti-itch medications to help provide more relief during these times. Flare ups can also be caused by parasites like fleas and mites, skin infections and food allergies, and these also need to be diagnosed and treated. Often when these "flare factors" are treated, the original anti-itch medication goes back to working again.

Dogs with prolonged or recurrent itch due to allergies are often diagnosed with atopic dermatitis, a common



August is Itchy Dog Month (cont'd.)

chronic skin condition that affects up to 10% of dogs worldwide. Atopic dermatitis is a condition that frequently gets worse over time, so it's important to treat it early to control the itch. Without proper treatment of your dog's itch, not only can they experience prolonged discomfort and the red, scaly, and irritated (and smelly) skin associated with inflammation, but they're at a higher risk for skin and ear infections.

This irritating and sometimes painful condition can cause your dog to lose interest in things they love because they're too busy scratching. And, since the itch doesn't have an off switch, their constant scratching, licking, and shaking can keep you up at night.

While chronic itching in dogs might not be curable, finding an anti-itch protocol that works for your dog will help them lead a happy, less-itchy life.

Why You Should Think Twice About Using Steroids to Treat Your Dog's Itch

Allergic itch affects many dogs and can present itself in ways other than scratching (like licking, chewing, rubbing, or scooting). The aim of treatment is to provide fast, effective, and safe relief for your dog.

The most important things you can do is work with your veterinarian to find the cause of your dog's itch. In the past, allergic itch was treated with antihistamines which were largely ineffective for most dogs, or with corticosteroids (prednisone) which worked but had undesirable side-effects, shown below.

Side Effects of Corticosteroids in Dogs

- Excessive urination.
- Increased thirst.
- Increased hunger.
- Heightened stress and anxiety.

Steroids have the potential to increase anxiety-related behaviors, like a lack of obedience, barking more often, and being restless, nervous, or fearful.

Dogs, pet parents, and corticosteroids don't always get along. Dog owners spend an average of 5 hours per week dealing with the side effects of dogs on steroids. These side effects can put a strain on the special bond you share with your dog. Ask us about alternative, targeted allergic itch treatment for your dog's itchy skin that can give you and your dog a positive experience.

Why Antihistamines Fail to Control Itch in Dogs

An itchy dog is a stress for the whole family. When our dogs are uncomfortable, we naturally feel for them and want to relieve their signs as quickly as possible. Antihistamines, like Benadryl®, have historically been an easy over-the-counter option to provide people (and pets) some relief. Yet, studies have demonstrated that while antihistamines may relieve respiratory allergies in humans, they had little or no effect on skin allergies in dogs.

Can Dog Itch Be Difficult to Treat?

Itchy dogs can be frustrating to treat — for the dog, the owner, and sometimes even the veterinarian. There are a variety of treatments that may be recommended for your itchy dog, including:

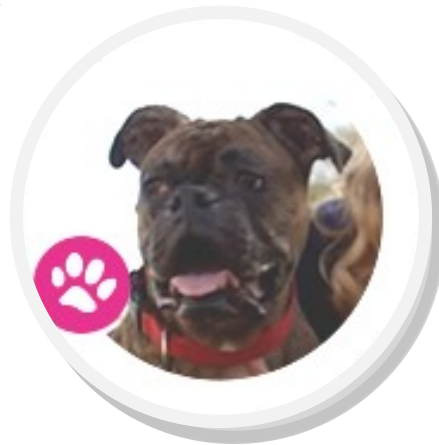
- Allergy medications to control itch and skin inflammation
- Anti-parasite treatments like oral or topical flea/tick preventatives
- Antibiotics or antifungals to treat the underlying skin infection(s)
- Topical therapy like shampoos, conditioners, and sprays for targeted treatment and to help keep the skin healthy

For uncomplicated itchy dog causes like fleas, treatment is easy to administer and can be up to 100% effective. For more complicated cases like dogs with seasonal or chronic allergies and secondary skin infections, it can be more challenging to completely eliminate the signs. However, there are treatment options available that can be used for the short-term and long-term management of skin allergies.

What About DIY and Over-the-Counter Options?

It may be tempting to reach for the anti-itch shampoos and sprays at your pet supply store or to pick up an antihistamine at the drugstore, but these may only provide temporary relief at best. Topical therapies may provide minor temporary relief in some mildly itchy dogs, but are not effective alone in controlling itch in most allergic dogs.

Let your Blue Ravine veterinarian know all of the current medications you are giving, as well as other medical conditions that your dog has, so we can make sure the prescribed medication is safe to use in your dog. We will try to make an individualized treatment for your dog and your lifestyle.





1770 Prairie City Road
 Folsom, CA 95630
 Phone: 916 984-0990
 Fax: 916 984-6510

BLUE RAVINE OFFICE HOURS

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 6:00 pm; Saturday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; Sunday, closed.
 For emergencies outside regular office hours, please call MarQueen Pet Emergency & Specialty, 916 757-6600
 or Sacramento Veterinary Referral Center, 916 362-3111.

www.blueravineanimalhospital.com

**COUPON: NexGard Plus, 1 Year,
 \$105 Instant Rebate, plus Free Toy**

