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UNDERSTANDING  
YOUR DOG'S  
SKIN CONDITION

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 **PURINA**  
**PRO PLAN**  
VETERINARY DIETS



Your Pet, Our Passion.®

## It's not uncommon

Many dogs may suffer from skin conditions during their life. There are many potential contributing factors, and allergic skin disease is particularly common. In fact, 10-30% of dogs are affected by allergic skin disease during their life<sup>1</sup>.

Parasites such as fleas, ticks or mites, or allergies to fleas (an overreaction of the immune system to a flea bite) are a very common cause of skin disease. Environmental allergens such as pollen, moulds and house dust mites are also a common cause. Sometimes infections from ringworm or bacteria may contribute to skin disease, and in some cases food allergies or an adverse food reaction might be present. An adverse food reaction (a food allergy or food intolerance) may cause gastrointestinal upsets, skin disease or a combination of both.

A poor coat condition may also be present if there are other underlying health problems such as hormonal imbalances (e.g. due to hypothyroidism).

Nutritional management can play a key role in supporting dogs with skin conditions. Diets such as PURINA® PRO PLAN® VETERINARY DIETS Canine DRM Dermatitis™ can be extremely helpful to benefit and support skin and coat health.

## Some breeds are more allergic than others

Some breeds are more likely to suffer from skin allergies or adverse food reaction than others<sup>2</sup>. These include:

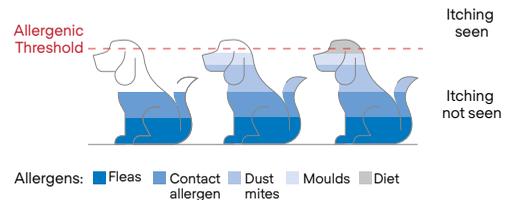
- West Highland White Terriers
- Lhasa Apsos
- Wirehaired Fox Terriers
- Golden Retrievers
- Labrador Retrievers
- English Bulldogs
- German Shepherd Dogs
- Boxers
- Dalmatians
- Shar Peis

## Understanding allergies in dogs

Just like human, some dogs can be more sensitive than others. Although sneezing and eye irritation are common signs of allergies in humans, allergies in dogs more commonly cause skin reddening, irritation and itching. You may also notice them scratching more at their ears or persistent licking and nibbling of their paws. In some cases, where food is contributing to the condition, they may also have intestinal upsets such as diarrhoea.

Some of the most common allergens (substances that cause allergies) are flea bites, dust mites, moulds, pollens and diet amongst others. If your dog is hypersensitive to an allergen, their body will produce inflammatory substances each time they come into contact with it. This inflammatory reaction can make your dog itch. Individual dogs have what is known as an 'allergenic threshold' (a limit of tolerance to allergic substances).

The exposure to different allergens is cumulative, so when different allergic stimulations are combined, we will see signs of the allergy/allergies once they exceed their individual allergenic threshold.



If a dog is prone to allergies it is likely they will be allergic to more than one thing. Their symptoms (such as itching and scratching or ear disease) may remain under control if they only encounter one or two of these substances - but encountering them all may push them over the 'allergenic threshold', resulting in them becoming very itchy. When managing a dog with multiple allergies it is often possible to keep their symptoms under control by reducing exposure to only some of the allergens (e.g. changing their diet and treating their fleas). Some allergens (e.g. pollen and moulds) may be extremely difficult to avoid.

1. Marsella R and De Benedetto A. (2017) Atopic Dermatitis in Animals and People: An Update and Comparative Review. Veterinary sciences; 4: 37  
2. Nuttall T, Uri M and Halliwell REW. (2013) Canine atopic dermatitis – what have we learned? Veterinary Record; 23: 201-7

## How do vets make a diagnosis of allergic skin disease?

If you think your dog may have allergic skin disease, your vet will perform a thorough physical examination to help to try and identify the cause(s). They will want to rule out the presence of external parasites (e.g. fleas). They may also wish to rule out potential reactions to any medications your dog may be on or any underlying conditions that could contribute to skin disease. They may also want to exclude a food allergy or adverse food reaction as a cause, and may suggest something called an 'elimination diet trial'. In some cases, they may recommend skin or blood tests too.

## What are the signs of allergic skin disease?

Itchiness (often referred to by your vet as pruritus) leads to dogs scratching excessively – particularly around the ears, stomach and inner areas at tops of their legs. They may also rub their face and chew at their paws.

Areas commonly affected by 'pruritus'.



Skin damage as a result of your dog scratching can lead to secondary problems such as redness of the skin, hair loss, skin infections or darkening of the skin. In light-coated dogs the hair can show red-brown staining.

## The right diet is very important

95% of each hair in a dog's coat is made up of protein, so good levels of high quality, highly digestible protein in the diet is important so support the skin and coat, help its integrity and allow it to repair if it is damaged.<sup>3</sup> Dogs can be sensitive to some of the proteins found in their diets. Therefore a diet containing a limited number of unusual protein sources (not commonly found in traditional dog foods) is beneficial.

High levels of dietary omega-3 fatty acids help to support the natural anti-inflammatory processes in the skin, and increased levels of omega-6 fatty acids help promote a healthy skin and coat. Specific vitamins (such as vitamins A, B, C and E) and minerals (such as zinc) are also needed to help maintain healthy skin and coat, and are essential to support normal immune function.

## How else can you help your dog?

Eliminating as many allergens as possible from your dog's environment is a good place to start:

- Implement a strict flea control regime throughout the year, both with your dog and also in the house.
- Pollens and moulds are more difficult to avoid, but grass meadows for grass-sensitive dogs should be avoided.
- Your vet may suggest some treatments including medications, anti-bacterial or soothing shampoos, and sometimes immunotherapy (which desensitises your pet to specific allergens).
- Feed your dog with a diet containing a limited number of protein sources.

All of these strategies aim to avoid as many allergens as possible, control the primary disease and help the skin to repair and remain in good condition.

3. Davenport GM, Et Al. The Impact of Nutrition on Skin and Hair Coat. In: current research in Dermatology. Proceedings from pre-congress symposium, 4th world congress of veterinary dermatology, San Francisco, 2000; 4-9

## Benefits of feeding CANINE DRM Dermatitis™ to your dog:



### Skin support

Increased<sup>4</sup> levels of specific nutrients to help support skin health



### Low antigen

Selected and limited number of protein sources to help minimise skin reactions to food



### Omega-3 fatty acids

Increased<sup>5</sup> levels of omega-3 fatty acids, to help support natural anti-inflammatory processes

## Feeding guidelines for Canine DRM Dermatitis™

Feeding CANINE DRM Dermatitis™ is an important part of supporting your dog if they have allergic skin disease or a poor quality skin and coat. Follow your vet's instructions as to how to feed this diet. CANINE DRM Dermatitis™ is also suitable for puppies.

Feeding guidelines are provided for adults and puppies on the product packaging and on the PURINA® website.

Usually, a gradual transition from your dog's previous diet to the new diet will be recommended over a period of 7-10 days, gradually mixing in the new food with the current diet and increasing the proportion of **DRM Dermatitis** offered over time. You should keep a close eye on your dog's skin and coat condition, both when you start to introduce this diet and longer term.

**Don't forget!** Follow your vet's instructions carefully and avoid feeding table scraps or treats, particularly as these might have the potential to trigger an allergic reaction.

This diet can be fed long term, but you should have regular check-ups with your vet, at least every 6 months. Provide fresh water daily.

## PURINA® PRO PLAN®: a name you can trust

PURINA® PROPLAN® VETERINARY DIETS are backed by strong science, with the latest nutritional findings applied to bring you some of the most innovative and effective formulas.

By following your vet's advice and by feeding **CANINE DRM Dermatitis™**, you can be confident that your dog will benefit from a diet that provides optimum nutrition to help support their skin and coat health.

Depending on your vet's recommendation, your dog may need to be fed with **CANINE DRM Dermatitis™** for some time. However once your dog's condition has improved, your vet may recommend transition onto **PURINA® PRO PLAN®** with **OPTIDERMA™**.



Please note that all indications for PURINA® Veterinary Diets mentioned in this brochure are for the dietary support of the dog with the listed condition and do not preclude appropriate medical management. The veterinary diets should be used under the supervision of your vet

4. vs FEDIAF nutrition guidelines  
5. vs National Research Council nutrition guidelines





**PURINA**<sup>®</sup>

# PRO PLAN<sup>®</sup>

VETERINARY DIETS



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PURINA<sup>®</sup> PRO PLAN<sup>®</sup> VETERINARY DIETS  
DRM DERMATOSIS<sup>™</sup>

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 **PURINA**<sup>®</sup>

**PetCareteam**

For advice on any aspect of pet care, just ask our experts

UK: **0800 212 161** ROI: **1800 509 368**

Monday-Friday 8am-6pm. Or contact us online at  
[www.purina.co.uk](http://www.purina.co.uk) | [www.purina.ie](http://www.purina.ie)

For more information, please speak  
to your vet or contact Nestlé PURINA<sup>®</sup>

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