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UNDERSTANDING  
YOUR CAT'S  
FOOD ALLERGIES

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



Your Pet, Our Passion.®

## What are food allergies?

Diagnosing if your cat has a true food allergy can be difficult. In this leaflet we will help you to recognise common signs of food allergy and explain why diet plays such an important role in its diagnosis and management. We will explain how you can feed a clinically proven diet designed to help reduce food allergies, which will improve your cat's quality of life.

Allergies involve an overreaction of the immune system, which is normally responsible for protecting the body against organisms such as bacteria and viruses. However, sometimes a harmless substance, such as a protein in food, is accidentally recognised as harmful by the immune system and an allergy develops.

## Food allergy or food intolerance?

Food intolerance is different to a food allergy as it does not involve the cat's immune system. Food intolerance in cats is caused by intolerance to specific nutrients in the diet when a cat has an inability or reduced ability to digest something in the food. An example of this is intolerance to lactose (a milk sugar) where cats can, just like people, lack the ability to digest lactose, causing diarrhoea.

The reason why some individuals develop an immune reaction (also known as 'hypersensitivity') to food proteins is not fully understood. Some cases may be due to abnormalities in the intestinal tract, resulting in the immune system being exposed to proteins that would normally not be absorbed intact across the intestines.

Although caused by different mechanisms, food allergy and food intolerance can sometimes be difficult to tell apart. However, their dietary management is very similar.

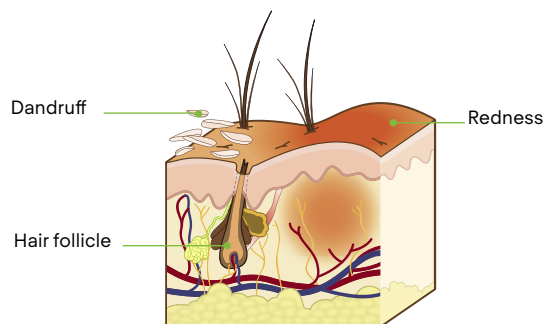
## What are the signs of food allergy?

The most common signs are either itchy skin (pruritus) or gastrointestinal signs such as vomiting or diarrhoea. Unlike flea bite allergies or allergies to pollen, which are often seasonal, a food allergy will be evident all year round.

### Skin signs include:

- Itchiness (ears, face, feet, tail, abdomen)
- Redness
- Loss of hair
- Skin infections

Diagram of the skin of a cat with food allergy:



### Gastrointestinal signs include:

- Flatulence
- Chronic and intermittent vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Weight loss and altered appetite

None of these signs are specific for food allergies and can be seen with a variety of other skin and intestinal upsets. Your vet will suggest various additional investigations to try to find out what is causing your cat's symptoms.

## How does your vet diagnose food allergy?

The only reliable method of diagnosing your cat's food allergy is to feed an "elimination diet" such as PURINA® PRO PLAN® VETERINARY DIETS HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™.

If your cat has a food allergy then the signs should disappear when you feed them FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™ as it is a hypo-allergenic diet. Hypoallergenic means it contains carefully selected proteins that have been specially treated (hydrolysed). When a diet is hydrolysed, the proteins in it are broken down to a tiny size so the immune system doesn't recognise and therefore react to them. The carbohydrate sources in Feline HA have also been carefully chosen to be very pure and with negligible protein content.

Your vet may recommend an elimination diet for a specific period of time, as a test to see if your cat's symptoms improve. This is known as an elimination diet trial, or simply, a diet trial.

In some cases, it can take a long time for symptoms to resolve so the trial could last for over 2 months. It is important that your cat is not fed anything else in this time. Treats, human food and even some flavoured medications can contain proteins that might cause a reaction, interfering with the diet trial. Only water should be given with the food, not milk.

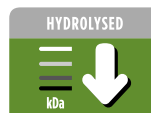
## Long-term management of your cat's food allergy

Once food allergy has been diagnosed, your vet will advise on appropriate management, which may include medication as well as a change in your cat's diet:

**1. Avoidance strategy:** if the specific protein causing the reaction was identified, your vet may recommend a diet that avoids this protein.

**2. Long-term feeding of a hypoallergenic diet:** another approach is to simply continue feeding the same hypoallergenic diet (such as FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™).

## Benefits of feeding FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™ to your cat



Single hydrolysed proteins with low molecular weight  
To help avoid allergic responses



Purified carbohydrates  
To help avoid allergic responses



Great taste  
Thanks to high quality ingredients and palatability booster

### St/Ox - a reassurance for urinary health

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) – problems with urination caused by urinary stones, crystals or cystitis - is a common issue in cats. FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™ has been specially formulated to help reduce the risk of FLUTD occurring, so whilst your cat's food allergy is being treated, you can also be reassured that the diet is helping keep your cat's urinary tract healthy.



## Feeding guidelines for FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™

Your vet will guide you with the amount of **FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™** to feed your cat. Feeding guidelines can also be found on the **PRO PLAN®** website and on the back of the bag.

**Elimination diet trial:** where possible use a short transition period followed by exclusive feeding of **FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™** for 8–12 weeks, or as directed by your vet. In most cases positive responses are likely to be seen within 3–6 weeks. If clinical signs resolve, this formula can be fed for life. **FELINE HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™** is also suitable for kittens. Ask your vet for guidance on feeding amounts for kittens.

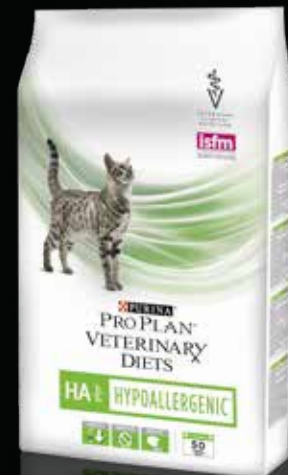
**Don't forget!** It is very important that you feed your cat only the recommended diet plus fresh water to drink. Exposure to any other food source could trigger an allergic reaction.

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

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

With **PURINA® PRO PLAN® VETERINARY DIETS HA St/Ox Hypoallergenic™** you can be confident that your cat will benefit from a diet that provides optimum nutrition whilst their food allergy is being managed.

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





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# PRO PLAN<sup>®</sup>

VETERINARY DIETS



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PURINA<sup>®</sup> PRO PLAN<sup>®</sup> VETERINARY DIETS  
HA HYPOALLERGENIC<sup>™</sup>

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**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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