



## **Atopy/Atopic Dermatitis**

### ***What is atopy/atopic dermatitis?***

Atopy or atopic dermatitis (aka environmental allergies), is an over-reaction by the immune system to elements in the environment including pollens, molds, dust mites, insects and dander resulting in inflammation of the skin and itching. Atopy is a genetically predisposed disease and therefore certain breeds have a higher risk of developing the disease. These breeds include Boston terrier, English bulldog, Labrador retriever, Lhasa Apso, miniature schnauzer, pug, Scottish terrier, West Highland white terrier and Yorkshire terrier.

### ***What are the symptoms of atopy?***

The most common symptoms of atopy include redness of skin and itching directed toward the face, paws and armpits. Symptoms may be seasonal or non-seasonal in nature and commonly affect animals between one and three years of age. Most patients with seasonal symptoms will develop year-round symptoms as their disease worsens with age. Patients with atopy are more susceptible to developing secondary skin and/or ear infections than normal dogs and cats.

### ***How is atopy diagnosed?***

Atopy is diagnosed based on history, clinical signs and exclusion of other skin diseases which can cause similar symptoms. Allergy testing is NOT performed to diagnose atopy, but rather formulate allergen-specific immunotherapy (ASIT) also known as “allergy shots” or “allergy vaccine”.

### ***How is atopy managed?***

Avoidance of the environmental elements your pet is sensitive to is ideal, however unlikely. Many different types of treatment including ASIT, oral medications which mask the symptoms and topical therapy are available to manage the symptoms of atopy. Often, several different types of therapy are prescribed. Therapy plans are unique and tailored to each patient based on their clinical symptoms. Symptoms of atopy tend to be lifelong in patients, therefore lifelong management is necessary to provide comfort and prevent secondary skin and ear infections from occurring. Antimicrobial therapy may also be prescribed if secondary infection is present.

If you are concerned your pet may have an environmental allergy, consider contacting the OVS Dermatology service at 918-299-4900 to schedule an appointment.