

Northern Oaks

Bird & Animal Hospital

Atopy

Your pet has been diagnosed with Atopy. This is a manageable condition that will affect your pet seasonally or year-round for the remainder of its life. It is important to remember that pets can experience a higher quality of life and a dramatic decrease in the amount of itching will be seen.

Definition: Pets with atopy will exhibit signs of allergy related to pollens, foods, danders, plants, fabrics, and many other environmental factors. They will scratch and chew over their bodies often causing secondary bacterial infections or even yeast infections. This is equivalent to people with allergies who are sniffing and sneezing.

Diagnosis: Your pet was diagnosed because of any combination of the following:

- Chronic foot licking or chewing
- Scratching in the absence of fleas
- Orange or brown saliva stains over the body, especially paws
- Recurring ear infections
- Seasonal skin infections
- Hair loss over the abdomen in cats
- Respiratory signs such as gagging, sneezing, or wheezing

Treatment: Atopy cannot be cured but can be controlled to varying degrees. Most pets will be placed on antihistamines to be given permanently. Pets will also require antibiotics for any secondary bacterial infection or antifungals for yeast infections. If the allergy is seasonal, a short course of an anti-inflammatory, such as prednisone, may be prescribed to lessen the severity of the symptoms during the allergy season. Anti-inflammatory and antibacterial shampoos can also be helpful in some cases to alleviate symptoms. If recurrence is still frequent and severe, a food trial may be prescribed to determine if food allergy is a component. An additional drug that inhibits allergic response, Atopica, may be prescribed in cases where the allergy cannot be controlled despite diet and other therapeutics. A referral to a veterinary dermatologist will sometimes be indicated, as well. The many steps to control atopy are sometimes a source of frustration to owners of atopic pets so it is imperative to remember that a lifelong commitment is required to manage atopy and improve the quality of life for your pet.

Complications: Even when well-controlled, atopic pets can still experience atopic events. During these events, a pet will still exhibit some of the original disease symptoms and may require antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, or antifungals for the flare-up. The goal of therapy for atopy is to decrease the frequency with which these atopic events occur and to lessen the severity of each event.