



What about limited-ingredient foods from the pet store?

There are many pet foods which claim to have limited ingredients or be hypo-allergenic. Some pets do very well on these diets. However, a 2014 study of 52 different commercial pet foods found that 40% of them contained at least one type of meat that was not listed on the label. This means that if your pet continues to show allergy signs on a 'limited ingredient' diet from the store, there is no way to tell if it is because their allergies are not caused by food, or if they are reacting to something in the food which is not on the label.

Have questions?

The Chester Valley staff is here to help, please ask if you have questions about food, allergies or any other aspect of your pet's health.



CHESTER VALLEY VETERINARY HOSPITAL
helping pets enjoy every adventure

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Food trials

Relief for your allergic pet



Determining if your pet has food allergies

Food allergies account for 10-15% of allergies in pets, and the only accurate way to determine if they are a factor for your pet is to complete a food trial. Skin or blood tests, conducted by a specialist, may be able to identify contact or inhaled allergies, but they do not work for food allergies.

It can take 8 to 12 weeks for allergy symptoms to subside after your pet eats something they are allergic to. Therefore, for a food trial to be accurate, you must be very strict about everything that enters your pet's mouth for up to 12 weeks.

We strongly recommend using z/d or d/d foods for a food trial.

These diets are known to be carefully controlled and tested, and they are produced in their own separate factories, so there is no residue from other ingredients anywhere in the building.

Specialized foods do cost more than what you can buy at the grocery store, but uncontrolled allergies lead to expensive medical issues, such as infections, and may cause your pet to be constantly uncomfortable.



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How to complete a food trial

The goal of a food trial is to have your pet eat only the specific food-trial diet for a full 8 to 12 weeks. **Nothing else can enter their mouth at any time.** At the end of the trial, if your pet's allergy symptoms are gone, or dramatically improved, they most likely have a food allergy. You and your veterinarian can then begin the process of determining which specific food(s) they are allergic to, or they can continue eating their trial food. If your pet does not improve, food is likely not a cause of their allergy symptoms, and they can go back to eating whatever you would like to feed them.

Food Trial Rules

- **Everyone who interacts with your pet must follow the rules. This includes children, neighbors and anyone who visits your house.**
- **Clean all bowls, scoops and food containers before starting the trial.**
- **No treats. No rawhides. No edible chew toys. Kibbles of the trial food can be given as treats.**
- **No flavorings. This includes flavored chew toys, toothpastes and medications.**
- **Do not allow your pet to grab things off the ground during walks, get into the trash or scrounge food scraps from the kitchen or under the table.**
- **If you have multiple pets, feed them separately.**
- **If your pet does eat something other than their trial food, they must start the 8 to 12 weeks all over again.**

Is the effort of a food trial worth it?

If we could explain the food trial to your pet, they would probably say yes. Uncontrolled allergies are often very uncomfortable. Constant itching isn't a fun way to live. And allergies cause reoccurring infections, which are painful, increase the number of vet visits for your pet, and take time and money to treat. Getting a handle on your pet's allergies can go a long way towards helping them live a comfortable, happy life.