

Treatment of Atopic Dermatitis in Dogs and Cats

What is atopic dermatitis?

Atopic dermatitis is an allergic skin disease which can affect both dogs and cats. At current, the exact cause of atopic dermatitis is not known. However, it is thought that affected animals are genetically predisposed and due to this, have an exaggerated immune response and also a defective skin barrier. The poor skin barrier allows an effortless penetration of the bacteria/yeast which are living on the skin as well as environmental allergens like mites. This leads to both the bacteria/yeast and the allergens causing the skin to inflame and itch.

Specifically in dogs, some breeds are more prone to develop the condition than others. The breeds more likely to develop atopic dermatitis include French Bulldogs and Labradors.

Treatment options for atopic dermatitis

As atopic dermatitis is a multifactorial chronic disease it will require a multimodal treatment approach to decrease itch and inflammation below the threshold of clinical signs. Some examples of factors which can influence the treatment decision include:

- The physical appearance of the skin and whether a secondary infection is present
- The route of administration
- The time it will take for the treatment to become effective
- If any treatment has been trialled recently and how effective this was
- Whether the affected area is localised or widespread
- If symptoms are seasonal or non-seasonal

Anti-itch treatments

There are six different anti-itch treatments available on the market, all of which are listed below:

- Topical steroid – eg Cortavance spray or Isaderm Gel (both licensed for dogs only)
- Cytopoint (licensed for dogs only)
- Prednisolone/ methylprednisolone/ dexamethasone
- Atopica/ Cyclavance/ Sporimune
- Apoquel (licensed for dogs only)
- Allergen specific immunotherapy

Your dermatologist will go through the specifics of the most suited treatments with you at your appointment.