



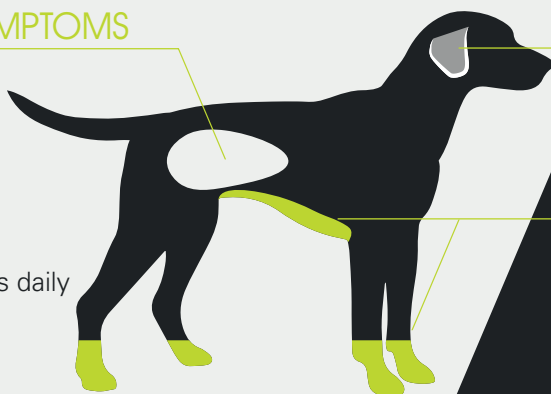
FOOD TRIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOGS

WHAT ARE FOOD ALLERGIES AND FOOD INTOLERANCES?

Food allergies and food intolerances can both cause digestive symptoms and are triggered by a reaction to one or more ingredients in the dog's diet. The difference is that a food allergy involves the immune system in this reaction, whereas a food intolerance does not. Food allergies will also very commonly cause skin and ear symptoms, which may occur on their own or in combination with digestive symptoms.

DIGESTIVE SYMPTOMS

Diarrhoea
Loose stools
Excess gas
Jelly on/with stool
Vomiting
More than 3 stools daily



EAR SYMPTOMS

Appearance: Smelly, irritated and inflamed, scabs
Behaviour: Itching, scratching, rubbing

SKIN SYMPTOMS

Appearance: Smelly, irritated and inflamed, areas of hair loss, dandruff/scabs, greasy and skin colour change
Behaviour: Itching, scratching, rubbing, persistent licking, chewing or nibbling

WHY HAS MY DOG BEEN PUT ON A FOOD TRIAL?

It is impossible to tell just from their symptoms whether an itchy dog has a food allergy, an allergy to something in their environment, or both, because the symptoms can look exactly the same. Likewise, there are many reasons for dogs to have digestive symptoms.

As part of the process to get a diagnosis for the symptoms your dog is displaying, it is important to either rule-in or rule-out a food allergy. For dogs with skin symptoms this is normally done after infections (bacterial, yeast and fungal) and ectoparasites (fleas, mites and lice) have already been ruled-out and/or treated. Those with digestive signs may have had blood tests and/or a sample of their stool sent for analysis first.

WHY CAN'T I JUST USE MEDICATION?

For some dogs with food allergies, removing the problem foods from their diet will mean that their symptoms will completely resolve, preventing the need for life-long medication. Other dogs with skin and ear signs will have both a food allergy and other allergies in addition (usually to things in their environment), so you may only see a partial improvement when the problem foods are removed. This is still very beneficial though, as allergy is a life-long condition and the dietary changes may reduce the amount of medication they need. Food allergies are common, especially in dogs with skin or ear problems, so while it's important to recognise many dogs will not improve during the dietary trial, the potential benefit for those that do makes it an essential part of the diagnostic work-up and well worth doing.

IS THERE NOT JUST A TEST TO DIAGNOSE FOOD ALLERGY?

The only way to diagnose a food allergy is by conducting a food trial and this in itself should be seen as a diagnostic test. However, there are blood tests available that can help you select which food to use for the trial. Like any diagnostic test, if a food trial is not run properly the results will be meaningless, so it is very important to follow the instructions completely.

WHAT DOES THE FOOD TRIAL ACTUALLY ENTAIL?

Conducting a food trial means that you will feed your dog a very strict diet for 8 weeks. If the symptoms do improve, the original food is given again to see if the symptoms return; only then do we know it was the diet that caused the improvement rather than something else (just a coincidence). Ideally, further investigation will then occur to identify which individual ingredients of the food are causing the reaction so these can be permanently removed from the diet.

WHAT DO I FEED MY DOG DURING THE TRIAL?

There are two types of dietary trial. A blood test can be used to help identify foods suitable to include for either type:

HOME-COOKED

This involves finding, then feeding, a totally 'novel' diet, avoiding all ingredients that your dog has previously eaten. To work out what is suitable an accurate, full dietary history needs to be taken.

Based upon this, a single protein source (e.g. a type of meat or fish) and a single carbohydrate source (e.g. potato, rice, pasta) and water are given and absolutely nothing else.

This diet is not suitable long-term without supplementation but is acceptable for the 8-week trial duration in most dogs (your vet will tailor it if necessary). You will need to either regularly prepare this diet freshly for your dog or batch cook and freeze.

HYDROLYSED DIET

These diets are not the same as hypoallergenic or 'skin sensitive' diets. In a hydrolysed diet, the components of the food have been broken down to be sufficiently small that it is very unlikely they will stimulate the dog's immune system and cause the food allergy symptoms.

These diets are specifically designed for the purpose of running food trials and are available as kibble or in tins.



It is essential that nothing other than the recommended food and water (and medications agreed by your vet) should pass your dog's lips for the duration of the diet trial, otherwise food allergy could be ruled out incorrectly

(See the attached information on common mistakes during dietary trials)

SUITABLE TREATS DURING THE DIET TRIAL

- For treats during the dietary trial use small amounts of the new agreed food.
- If using a hydrolysed diet – soak kibble in water and then bake it to make your own treats.
- If using fresh food in a home-cooked diet make the treats from scratch rather than re-heating.

STARTING THE DIETARY TRIAL

To minimise the chance of a digestive upset, gradually introduce the new diet over a period of 5-7 days. Slowly give more of the new diet and less of the old until it is completely replaced. If your dog has any digestive upset (vomiting/diarrhoea), refuses to eat the new diet, seems to be losing weight, does not have a bowel movement for more than 24 hours or you are concerned for any other reason about the diet, please contact your vet.

MONITORING PROGRESS

It is helpful to note down every week how you feel your dog's symptoms are, so we can track their progress. Useful things to jot down include; level of itchiness from 0-10, any changes in bowel habits, if they have eaten anything they shouldn't have (please use the Food Trial Diary on page 4).

DETAILS FOR YOUR DOG

Name of dog:

Selected diet:

Dogs current weight:

Amount to be fed daily: Home-cooked diet
Hydrolysed diet.....
Feed as indicated on packaging for dog's weight unless otherwise stated by your vet.

Date for next appointment:

COMMON MISTAKES DURING DIETARY TRIALS

FEEDING TREATS, CHEWS AND MEDICATIONS

- Nothing else should pass your dog's lips without your vets prior consent including: treats, flavoured medications, things to wrap unflavoured medication in to disguise it, supplements, dental or rawhide chews, pigs' ears, bones or anything used to coat the inside of chew toys. Please see page 2 for suitable treats to feed your dog.

ACCIDENTALLY CONTAMINATING THE DIET

- Take great care to wash food bowls, serving scoops, your hands and cooking utensils/pots & pans (if using) before preparing food, to avoid stray proteins being passed on.
- Change to a ceramic, stainless steel or glass bowl (not plastic) if the symptoms are predominantly around the muzzle and face.

DROPPED OR RAIDED FOOD

- If your dog is likely to scavenge dropped food, remove it from the kitchen or dining area when preparing food or eating meals. Ensure that any dropped food or spills are cleaned up straight away.
- Do not let your pet lick the plates in the dishwasher.
- Ensure access to the bin is restricted and cupboards and feed bins are secure.
- Keep dogs that seek out rubbish or sheep/rabbit/ horse poo during walks on leads while on the food trial or consider using a basket muzzle (which may also stop other owners giving them sneaky treats).
- If introducing a basket muzzle for the first time, ask your vet for guidance on making it a positive experience so your dog does not resent it being used or become fearful of it.

SOMEONE ELSE LOOKING AFTER THE DOG

- Make sure that kennels, dog walkers, pet sitters, friends and relatives who visit, all understand what food is to be fed to your pet to ensure the diet is strictly kept to.
- Consider waiting until you return to start the trial if you have a holiday planned soon.

HAVING MORE THAN ONE ANIMAL IN THE HOUSE

- Separate pets at meal times and clean out bowls afterwards to stop animals eating food intended for other pets.
- If they, or other household dogs are grazers, consider feeding both on the new diet (check with your vet).
- Ensure any cat food is either raised up out of the dogs reach or only down when the dog is strictly supervised/restricted from it.

'NON-BELIEVERS' IN THE HOUSE SNEAKING THEM A SNACK

- Sit down and explain the 'rules' of the trial to everyone involved including those who visit the house or have any contact with your pet.
- Explain why the trial matters (the impact the condition is having on your dog).

STOPPING TOO SOON

- Some animals will take eight weeks or longer to show a positive response.
- It is important to persevere through to the agreed end date. **Don't give up too soon!**



FOOD TRIAL DIARY

Complete at the end of each week using the guidance notes below

AMOUNT OF ITCHING

Grade from 0 to 10, with 0 being a normal dog and 10 being constant itching regardless of what is happening around them.

NUMBER OF BOWEL MOVEMENTS

Estimate the average number of stools produced per day for that particular week.

STOOL QUALITY

Grade from 0 to 5, with 0 being what you would expect from a normal dog (well-formed stool, no jelly, brown colour) to 5 (diarrhoea, excessive amounts jelly).

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Note in here any other observations about your dog's behaviour or symptoms and also write down any accidental intake of food that is not part of the trial diet.

	AMOUNT OF ITCHING	NUMBER OF BOWEL MOVEMENTS	QUALITY OF STOOL	ANY OTHER COMMENTS
WEEK 1				
WEEK 2				
WEEK 3				
WEEK 4				
WEEK 5				
WEEK 6				
WEEK 7				
WEEK 8				