

REFERENCE GUIDE

OPTIMAL TIMING FOR SEROLOGICAL ALLERGY TESTING

The optimal time to sample for allergen-specific IgE serological testing will vary dependent on:

- the level and timing of allergen exposure (e.g. less exposure to pollens is expected in the winter)
- the individual immune response (which itself will vary and is affected both by age and certain medications)
- how long each animal will take to clear IgE and IgG antibodies from the blood after exposure

The guidelines below can be used to maximise the chances of generating meaningful test results.

1. SAMPLE WHEN FULLY SYMPTOMATIC

Unless clinical signs are controlled ONLY using medications that are not thought to affect testing, we would advise:

- always sampling when the animal is fully symptomatic; and
- either before starting on medication or after withdrawing it for a sufficient time period*.

* Please see our **Medication Withdrawal Guidelines** for further information and see overleaf for details of our serum storage facility.

2. AGE

We advise ideally testing from 12-15 months of age in order to allow:

- maternally derived antibody levels to subside;
- exposure to a complete allergy season, regardless of the time of year they were born.

If earlier testing is felt necessary, we would advise re-testing when over 12 months of age to capture any further hypersensitivities that may develop.

3. ACUTE ONSET CASES

For cases with a rapid onset of clinical signs that may only last for a few days, such as acute urticaria, we would advise:

- testing at least 24 hours after symptoms start; but
- ensuring that sampling takes place before signs have started to clinically improve.

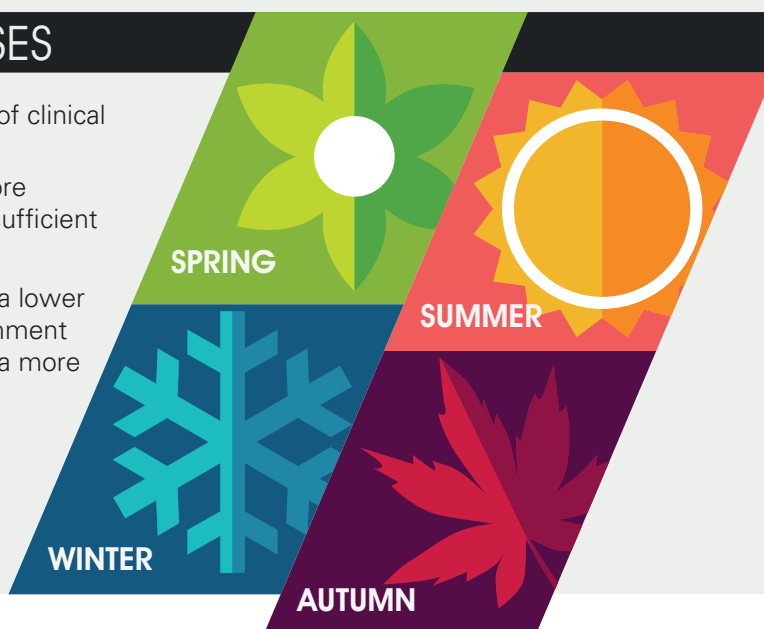
Sampling within this window increases the chances of serological IgE being sufficiently raised after exposure to allergens so that it can be detected, but before the IgE is on the decline due to clearance from the blood.

4. CHRONIC SEASONAL CASES

For chronic seasonal cases with a more gradual onset of clinical signs, we would advise:

- waiting at least 2 weeks after symptoms start before environmental allergen testing, to ensure there is sufficient levels of allergen-specific IgE in the blood.

This is because the initial signs may be in response to a lower allergen burden (fewer pollens or insects in the environment in the early season for example), which could result in a more gradual increase in the level of antibodies in the blood. See also point 6 overleaf.



5. ALLERGEN AVOIDANCE

If a level of allergen avoidance has already been implemented (e.g. a restricted diet or stabling to avoid pollens / insects), then these restrictions must be removed prior to testing:

- for environmental allergens this should be for at least 2 weeks;
- for food allergens this should be at least 2 months (as the food testing also measures allergen-specific IgG which may take longer to increase).

Minimising recent exposure prior to testing can lead to lower levels of allergen-specific IgE or IgG in the blood and therefore potentially produce false negative results.

6. SEASONAL SYMPTOMS

If animals have a definite seasonal component to their clinical signs, we would advise sampling at the time of year in which their clinical signs are at their worst.

It can be beneficial to sample towards the end of this period but before their signs have started to wane. This way you know:

- the animal has been recently / is still being exposed to the relevant allergens;
- the serological IgE should be sufficiently elevated; and
- if appropriate, allergen specific immunotherapy can be started prior to the next season.

REMEMBER!

- Environmental allergy testing is used after the diagnosis of atopic dermatitis has been made (following the appropriate clinical rule-outs) to identify potential allergens.
- Food allergy testing is used to help identify suitable ingredients for a dietary trial; the dietary trial itself is used for the diagnosis of adverse food reactions.
- All results should be interpreted alongside the history, clinical signs and environmental considerations.



Sampling at the optimum time will increase the chance of getting meaningful results. Avacta Animal Health offers a **FREE** of charge **serum storage facility** (initially for 3 months) to enable you to sample before medicating and then test if and when you are ready.

For more information visit the Avacta Practice Portal at avactaanimalhealth.com/login

