



DERMATOLOGY:

Allergy Testing/Allergen Specific Immunotherapy (ASIT)

Indications

Candidates for allergy testing with a classic history of atopic dermatitis (AD) including warm weather seasonal pruritus (may have progressed to become non-seasonal) + pruritus of the face, ears, feet, inguinal/axillary regions and/or proximal anterior forelegs need to undergo a diagnostic workup so that AD is the only possible remaining diagnosis. Other causes of pruritus such as cutaneous adverse food reaction (CAFR), flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), ectoparasites, etc. must be ruled out. Allergy testing is NOT used for the diagnosis of AD but to detect what an animal produces allergen specific IgE to, as a way to select allergens for allergen specific immunotherapy (ASIT). The two types of allergy tests available include intradermal testing (IDT) and allergen-specific IgE serum testing (ASIST). Using BOTH tests together in the appropriate situation maximizes the chance of picking up most allergens and gives the best clinical outcome with ASIT. IDT is still the preferred method if only one test is chosen. However, when IDT gives negative results in an otherwise classically atopic dog or when ASIT based on IDT is unsuccessful, ASIST may be most useful.

Ideal time for testing

The ideal time for allergy testing in Michigan is at the END of the allergy season (**November to killing frost**) because the IgE is gone from the blood ~2-3 months after exposure/season. Therefore, if allergy testing was done in a classic atopic dog in January or February, it is likely that the test would be falsely negative necessitating repeat allergy testing in the Fall.

Adverse effects

Adverse reactions to ASIT are uncommon but may occur in up to ~5% of patients. Adverse reactions include worsening of clinical signs for a few hours to a few days post injection, irritability, local injection reactions (edema, erythema, pain, pruritus), and anaphylaxis (vomiting, diarrhea, dyspnea). Worsening of clinical signs (pruritus) is the most common with anaphylaxis being very rare.

Client education

About 65-75% of AD cases respond to ASIT (either needing no other medications or less potent medications than previously). ASIT stimulates the pet's own immune system, which stops the allergic reaction from occurring. Injections are given every 7-21 days for **LIFE**. We depend on the immune system for the allergy injections to work, therefore, it may **take 6-12 months for efficacy** and the patient may get worse before getting better.

Preparation

Rule out other causes of pruritus! Appropriate drug withdrawal includes **14 days** for antihistamines, fatty acids, and NSAIDs, **30 days** for oral, injectable and TOPICAL steroids and **90 days** for repositol steroids. Cyclosporine DOES NOT interfere with allergy testing so no withdrawal is needed. Sedation with dexmedetomidine or xylazine (NOT general anesthesia) allows for quick recovery with patients ready to return to their owners within 1-2 hours.

MVS Dermatology Experts:
Candice Benuck, DVM, DACVD
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Michigan Veterinary Specialists provides Dermatology Service at all three hospital locations. For your clients convenience we offer evening and weekend appointments. Our dermatology doctors are available for questions and consultations on dermatologic conditions during the weekdays.

LOCATIONS

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