

Pet **Tips**



*Presented
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Has your dog scratched himself bald and driven you crazy?

If you've ruled out the obvious culprit—fleas—then it's time to do a little investigative work with your vet.

One of the first things your vet might do is check for mites and ringworm. To check for mites, they'll lightly abrade the skin and look at the sample under a microscope. To check for ringworm, they can shine a black light on your pet, but this test can be inconclusive. The best way to diagnose ringworm with certainty is to do a fungal culture. Results for the fungal culture will take 10-14 days. So your vet may preemptively treat if signs of ringworm are present.

Most dog owners immediately associate itching with allergies. They may be right. But along with an allergy diagnosis come a lot of questions. Are the allergies seasonal? Is the pet allergic to food? If so, which food or ingredient? Is it environmental? Or could they be allergic to their own dander? Allergy testing is the only way to get a definitive answer to these questions. The test is performed through a simple blood draw and sending the sample to a lab for testing. Once the results are in, antigens, carefully doses portions of what your pet is allergic to, can be administered. There are specialized diets on the market specially designed for allergy pets. Treats have even recently become available, so your pet can have those additional goodies as well!

There are medications that the vet can give your pet to provide immediate relief. Proper diagnostics are very important prior to giving these medications. There are also shampoos that can provide some degree of relief for most skin conditions.

P.S. Bring in this column and receive \$10 off your pet's first exam. Offer expires April 30, 2008.

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