

Severe allergic reactions in pets

Overview

- Pets can have allergic reactions just like people.
- Common triggers include insect stings, plants and medications (including vaccinations).
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction (listed below) can start suddenly and without warning.
- Severe allergic reactions can be life threatening.
- Get vet help ASAP if you think your pet is having a severe allergic reaction.

General information and causes



Pets can have allergic reactions just like people. Allergic reactions happen when the body overreacts to something. It's possible for a pet to be allergic to almost anything but the most common triggers include:

- Medicines (such as vaccines, flea medicines and antibiotics)
- Insect stings and bites
- Certain chemicals
- Certain foods

The first allergic reaction to a substance is usually quite mild, but each reaction after that is likely to be worse. However, occasionally a first reaction is severe and happens without warning.

First aid for a severe allergic reaction

Step one: Check your pet

Symptoms vary depending on what your dog has reacted to and how severe their reaction is.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) include:

- Breathing difficulties (if your pet stops breathing, they may need CPR)
- Rapid swelling (often of the lips or eyes)
- Cold ears, legs and feet
- Collapse/ fainting
- Coma or death

Other, signs of a milder allergic reaction include:

- A skin rash/ bumps
- Swelling around other parts the body
- Sickness or diarrhoea
- Drooling

Step two: Take your pet to your vet

- Anaphylaxis is the same kind of life-threatening reaction that some humans get with peanut allergies, it's an emergency that should be treated immediately.
- If your pet has trouble breathing or their face is swelling up quickly go to your vets ASAP- if possible phone on the way to check they are ready for your pet to arrive.
- If you see mild signs, call your vet for advice. They may need medications to help stop the reaction getting worse and to keep them comfortable.

Coronavirus update: During lockdown, it's important to call your vet practice to check they are open before you arrive. If they are closed, it's likely that you will be directed to another local practice.

Treatment

Treatment for an allergic reaction depends on how severe the reaction is. If your pet has a mild reaction, they're likely to be given medication to prevent it getting worse and you will be asked to monitor them at home.

If your pet has a more severe reaction, it's likely they'll be admitted into the veterinary hospital for intensive treatment. Treatment for a severe reaction is likely to include a fluid drip, medication to reduce their reaction and in some severe cases, a tube placed into their airways to help them breathe.

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