



Basmati

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[Home](#) > [Combat Your Dog's Allergies The Natural Way](#)

Combat Your Dog's Allergies The Natural Way



Springtime can be tough on people who experience allergies, and summertime, while slightly better, can still be a rough season for those allergic to pollen and environmental toxins. Just like humans, however, pets can also suffer from seasonal allergies due to a variety of reasons. Last week, for example, I brought my dog on a camping trip to the nearby mountains. He enjoyed tromping through meadows and snuggling under my sleeping bag at night, but by the time we returned home on Sunday afternoon, he had several pus-filled bumps on his head, neck, and back. When I brought him into the vet the following day, the vet had one word for me: allergies. The wet spring and humid summer we had experienced in Southern California had brought a sudden infestation of insects while simultaneously creating incredibly happy, but pollen-filled, plants. My dog was breaking out because of allergies!

While antihistamine creams and ointments are often necessary, alternative options can often help and, in some cases, be a first resort. Is your dog itching, scratching, and overall miserable due to allergies? Here are some tips for caring for your pup like you might yourself:

1. Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is popular amongst foodies and holistic-minded folk alike, because of both its rich taste and its nutritional profile. Besides providing plenty of energy, a shiny coat, and good digestion, coconut oil can help with itchiness and dry coats, as [this article in Dogs Naturally Magazine](#) points out. It's important, however, to slowly add coconut oil into your pet's diet as large amounts can contribute to diarrhea or vomiting. Additionally, just like quality is important in the human diet, so too is quality necessary for your dog. Choose [extra virgin coconut oil that has been unrefined](#) for the best result. [This guide](#) suggests giving your dog 1 teaspoon of coconut oil per 10 pounds that your dog weighs. Be sure to slowly increase to this amount, however, and not past it, preferably by adding it into your dog's food for best digestion. Another option is to rub coconut oil directly onto your dog's coat to repel insects that detest the smell and taste. Be warned: your dog's coat might look a little greasy.

2. Grain-Free or Homemade Food

Just like one's diet can decrease allergy symptoms, so too can a dog's diet. Conventional, often cheap, dog foods are predominantly made up of fillers like corn, soy, wheat, and processed meat by-products. Switching your dog over to a grain-free, organic diet can help eliminate any potential problems at the root and, while it's not possible for everyone due to time and economic restrictions, raw and homemade meals can be ideal. Consider adding in supplements, like [omega-3 fatty acids](#) to help dogs suffering from skin conditions. [An article in Whole Dog Journal](#) recommends supplementing with licorice—a natural anti-inflammatory. Holistic nutritionists, specifically those who work with pets, can often make recommendations based on your individual dog and his or her symptoms.

3. Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is becoming increasingly popular across the U.S. for humans, but aromatherapy can be a terrific addition to an anti-allergy protocol for your pet, too. [Lavender](#) is a common essential oil and is known as an anti-fungal, anti-septic, anti-inflammatory, and antihistamine, as [an article in Dogs Naturally Magazine](#) explains. While lavender essential oil can be used topically, be careful that you do not put several drops directly onto your dog's skin as it can, in some cases, cause burning. [Be sure to check with your veterinarian and holistic doctor](#) before doing so. Other essential oils, like peppermint, can also be used orally as an anti-allergen. (But peppermint's not good for cats; it's always best to check with a holistic doctor first.)

4. Wash their paws

It might seem obvious: we wouldn't walk around in our barefeet on the sidewalk, road, or trail, but dogs do that everyday, often without having a bath. Dogs' coats and paws collect bacteria, pollen, dust, and other potential [allergens](#) that can be detrimental to a sensitive dog when left for several days at a time. My dog is small enough that giving him a quick bath in the kitchen sink isn't a problem, but consider setting up a rinsing station or a foot bath to wash off your dog's paws when he or she comes in from a walk or the dog park. Make sure you use a mild shampoo like Dr. Bronner's unscented.

5. Quercetin

Quercetin is a commonly recommended supplement for dogs and conveniently called

“Nature’s Benadryl.” Quercetin has the ability to turn off the histamine reaction that dogs can have during allergy season, so it can be a helpful preventative. Look for the supplement at a holistic pet store.

Do you have any tactics for combating seasonal allergies in your pet?

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