



Immunotherapy

Once we have determined what your pet is allergic to by either intradermal allergy testing or serological allergy testing, treatment with immunotherapy can begin.

What is immunotherapy?

When a dog or cat has allergies, their immune system is over reacting to certain things in the environment. This over reaction causes inflammation and therefore itching and secondary skin and ear infections.

Immunotherapy is the only specific treatment for allergies, when avoidance is impossible. Immunotherapy works by taking what the animal is allergic to and exposing them to it via injections until the immune system no longer sees it as a threat. This results in the immune system becoming less sensitive to the substances that trigger the allergic reactions. Immunotherapy injections are made specifically for each patient depending on the results of allergy testing. The injections are then given under the skin on a regular basis. By using this treatment option, you are treating the root cause of the problem and not just masking the itch.

How successful is immunotherapy?

Approximately 80% of dogs will have an excellent or good response. Immunotherapy is not a quick fix and needs built up over a period of months. Treatment should be continued for at least 1 year before assessing efficacy.

Does immunotherapy have any side effects?

Immunotherapy is a very safe treatment option and can therefore be given long term. Some of the other medications used to treat the inflammation associated with allergies can have significant disadvantages when used long term, making immunotherapy a more favourable long term treatment option. The most common side effect when starting immunotherapy is increased itching at time of injection, this however is often a good sign and indicates the therapy is working. We can alter the dose and injection interval accordingly. For the first immunotherapy injection I request that you wait in the surgery for 30 minutes after. This is so we can monitor for any adverse reactions. Adverse reactions to immunotherapy are very rare however signs may include laboured breathing, vomiting, diarrhoea and hives.

How frequently will my pet need immunotherapy injections?

During the induction phase of immunotherapy, lasting approximately 3 months, the injections will be given every 2-3 weeks and the dose will slowly be increased. After an initially build up period injections will typically be given monthly and are generally lifelong. However, in some cases they may only be required every two months or occasionally not at all.

Can I administer the injections myself?

If you wish I can show you how to administer the injections yourself at home after the initial build up period.