

PET CARE



Helping Cats with Allergies

Is your cat sneezing more often than purring? Scratching more frequently than cuddling? Allergies may be to blame.

The quicker you identify and eliminate the culprit behind your cat's reactions, the sooner she will be back to her cute old self.

When a cat has allergies, her immune system is overly sensitive and susceptible to everyday substances. Most of these allergens are common in most environments, but they can have major impacts on the comfort level and overall health of your favorite feline.

SYMPTOMS

You may notice your cat sneezing or coughing more often when it is struggling with allergies. Increased scratching is also a telltale sign of an irritation that may be caused by an allergic reaction. A food allergy can cause vomiting and diarrhea, as well.

If you notice these symptoms – along with any paw chewing or swollen paws – it is important to retrace the past few days of your cat's activities. This will help you identify potential causes and prepare you for a conversation with your veterinarian.

CAUSES

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the following substances are usually to blame for allergic reactions in cats:

- Pollens from trees, grass or weeds
- Mold, mildew and dust spores
- Certain types of food
- Fleas and/or topical flea-control products
- Cleaning products used around the home
- Cigarette smoke
- Certain fabrics, rubber or plastic materials

ACTION

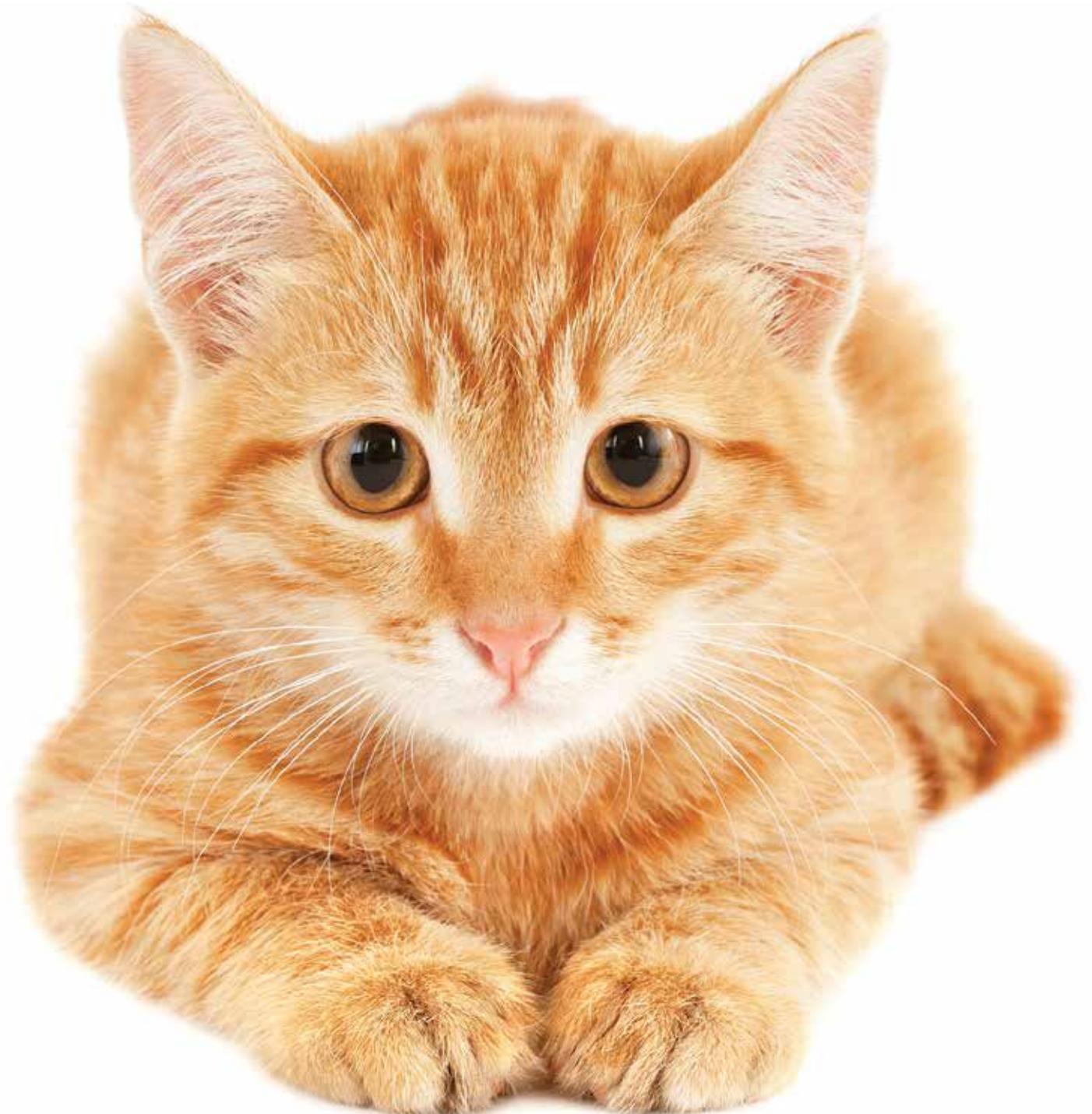
At the onset of any behavior you think may be linked to allergies, visit your veterinarian for a checkup.

Just like a human trying to get to the bottom of

an allergic reaction, your cat will undergo a physical examination and possibly skin or blood tests to find the cause.

Your veterinarian may also recommend a spe-

cial elimination diet, restricting certain aspects of your cat's daily food intake to identify and mitigate any dietary issues that may be triggering the reactions.



Pets and Health

As humans, we are taught to exercise daily and watch what we eat. Whether or not we adhere to this advice is entirely up to us.

If we don't watch our diet, we can find ourselves on the fast track to obesity and serious chronic health issues. But pets don't have the luxury of choosing their overall health situation.

They are depending on us, their owners, to make good decisions and keep them trim. Fortunately, pets are generally low maintenance to keep in shape.

CUT DOWN ON TABLE SCRAPS

One area that can make a big impact on the health of your pet is animal obesity. Too many table scraps and not enough exercise have combined to make more than 50 percent of cats and dogs overweight or obese, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention.

As more research is directed toward pet health, medical experts stress the importance of fitness and agility training.

Overweight and obese pets are at higher risk for diabetes, joint pain, high blood pressure and other weight-related diseases and injuries.

DIET PLAN

Especially if you are concerned about your pet's burgeoning fur line, it could be time to make a specific diet plan.

A recent study by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals showed that only 16 percent of dog owners decide how much to feed their dog



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based on its weight or body shape and only 14 percent ask their veterinarian for guidance.

With pet sizes ranging from small to large and everywhere in between, creating a customized diet plan is a good way to keep pet weight under control.

EXERCISE

There are many exercises that owners and pets can do together to improve their overall health and relationship. Playing fetch, swimming or setting up a simple obstacle course, for example, can help improve overall

agility and joint health for both parties.

Dogs generally need more vigorous exercise than other pets, with many of them required to receive at least 15 to 60 minutes per day, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Pet Emergencies: Hit by Car

The thought of a pet being struck by a car is enough to make owners cringe. But in the moments directly preceding such an accident, quick decisions may have to be made to determine if your pet survives.

Are you ready to take those actions? What is the first step to take if you see or hear a pet struck in the street?

STOP THE BLEEDING

A quick assessment of the animal's overall condition will help you identify any overt bleeding that needs to be stopped quickly.

Wrap the affected area tightly with a towel or blanket and apply direct pressure. If the animal is unconscious, open the jaws and airways to see if there is any blood or vomit in the back of the throat.

CHECK FOR BREATHING

Feel your pet's stomach and listen carefully for breathing. It may be faint, but any sign of breathing is a good one.

If you hear the animal breathing, don't open its mouth to check for obstructions. Your pet can be dazed after being struck and may feel the urge to protect itself by biting.

READY FOR TRANSPORT

If you determine that your pet needs

emergency medical care, get them on to a moveable piece of board that can fit in your vehicle.

Roll them gently onto the board and carefully set them down into your vehicle – preferably to the back where if they flail they aren't directly affecting your driving ability.

FIND EMERGENCY CARE

Once you've stopped the bleeding and ensured regular breathing, calling for help is an action that needs to be taken quickly.

Does your area have an overnight pet clinic that handles after-hours emergencies? If so, know the location and the number to call.

Some are case-by-case and will only be available if you call ahead of time to let them know you're coming.

Don't depend on your memory to know who to call. Have the clinic number stored in your phone or on a piece of paper with your other emergency contact information.



Pets Can be Pricey

We all love our pets. We show it by taking care of their every need. Our time, energy and emotional support are all required to successfully nurture a pet.

So too is money, and a lot of it! The American Pet Products Association estimates that Americans will spend \$55.5 billion in total pet industry expenditures this year. Food, toys, trips to the veterinarian and gifts — they all add up to a hefty percentage of American spending.

And the number doesn't figure to decrease any time soon. Take a look at the graphs below and then determine your own monthly spending. You may be surprised how much of your income is going to the dogs — and cats, exotics, horses and others.

TOTAL PET SPENDING

SOURCE: The American Pet Products Association

Year	Billion
2013	\$55.53 Estimate
2012	\$53.33 Actual
2011	\$50.96
2010	\$48.35
2009	\$45.5
2008	\$43.2
2007	\$41.2
2006	\$38.5
2005	\$36.3
2004	\$34.4
2003	\$32.4

PET SPENDING BY CITY

SOURCE: The United States Department of Labor

City	Monthly Spending
Scottsdale, AZ	\$47.88
Durham, NC	\$38.13
Tucson, AZ	\$36.50
Chandler, AZ	\$35.88
Colorado Springs, CO	\$35.75



Pet Toy Safety

Every pet needs time to play. It is good for their health and can help improve behavior and socialization skills.

But an online search or walk through the local pet store can be a bit overwhelming for anyone looking to buy that perfect toy. Some toys bounce, others squeak and many are designed for breed-specific pets.

The ideal toy for your nine-pound Calico cat is

obviously going to differ from the one for your 150-pound Rottweiler. Here are some tips to remember on your hunt:

- **Safety, Safety, Safety:** You know your pet's tendencies better than anyone. If your dog has a penchant for destruction, then maybe a flimsy plastic toy isn't the best option. A sturdier, thick vinyl one may be ideal. Always remember to keep any eye on your pet with a new toy. Watch out for choking or bleeding to keep playtime safe.

- **Training Tactics:** Introducing a new toy can elicit excitement, energy and elation. Use this power to train a new behavior. If you're working on a particular issue with your pet, wait until a

positive occurrence to bring out the toy.

- **Jaw Power:** Young puppies need jaw exercise to advance their physical development. The right chew toy can help accomplish this without harming their teeth. Watch for bleeding or chipping during their play.

- **Switch Things Up:** Keep your pet's toys on a rotational basis. Switch out your toys every month or so to keep your pet engaged in playtime. This freshness will not only ensure that toys last longer, but will also work toward mentally stimulating your pet.

- **Simple is Best:** Sometimes all your pet needs is a little TLC and an old-fashioned game of fetch with a new ball. Making play time a part of your daily routine will help build the bond between you and your pet.



Urban Dog Etiquette

Owning a dog in the city can be a challenge. Lacking the rural space to let their pooches parade through the prairie, city-dwellers are often forced to use the street or local parks to let their dogs exercise.

While somewhat inconvenient, it is not impossible to find the time and perfect places to take your pup. Be sure to check on all regulations to make sure you are obeying your local laws.

LEASH LAWS

Most cities have some form of leash law designed to protect your dog, other dogs and community members.

Keeping a dog leashed helps prevent potential traffic incidents and fights with other dogs that can occur if canines are allowed to roam free. Pet owners can also prevent emergencies by keeping their pets on leashes at all times.

Injuries like being hit by a car or falling down the stairs can be avoided, as can a hefty fine from city or county officials for not obeying your local leash laws.

POOPER SCOOPER LAWS

Yes, these exist and are diligently enforced.

Designed to protect the health and beautification of the community, these ordinances require pet owners to pick up feces in plastic bags and knot the top to control odors before disposing of them into a waste recepta-



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cle.

Owners in cities are also urged to train their dogs to urinate on non-living vertical surfaces such as lampposts or hydrants.

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Just because your apartment or condo allows pets doesn't mean that all of your neighbors are dog-lovers.

You can improve your reputation as a good neighbor by controlling the noise, behavior and socialization skills of your dog.

If you can't take the stairs or back exit for your dog's out-

door exercise, be sure your dog knows how to behave on an elevator. Keep him or her from jumping on or barking at other riders to ensure a positive experience for all tenants.

Taking Pets on Vacations

Do you plan on taking Fido on vacation? Then you better plan on packing plenty of other items to ensure his safety and well-being.

The majority of pet owners — 61 percent — travel 50 miles or more with their pets at least once a year, according to a study by the Independent Pet and Animal Transportation Association International.

Pets can make fun additions to any family vacation, but their presence requires a little bit of extra planning on your part. So after you pack your dancing shoes or camping gear, throw a bag together for your pet, too.

Here's what you'll need:

THE BASICS

Don't forget the essentials – your pet's ID tag and a reliable collar and leash. You will also need a general understanding of the area you will be visiting.

Is it pet-friendly? Does it allow pets on trails, picnic areas or inside the place you will be lodging

These are important questions to ask when determining if your pet can even make the trip with you. Also, a little research on nearby veterinarians and animal hospitals could help you be prepared for a quick transport in the case of an emergency.

CONTACT CARD

Your family veterinarian's phone number is also an important tool to bring with you on vacation. In the event of an emergency, your pet could be worked on by another medical professional.

Being able to contact your regular vet would help serve as a helpful resource in ensuring consistent, cohesive care for your pet. Information concerning health history and medicine allergies can help your pet receive the best, safest care possible.

FIRST-AID KIT

A first-aid kit is always a great addition to any trip – short or long. And the basics within the kit really shouldn't be very different than the one you bring for yourself and family.

Pack tweezers for removing thorns from paws, roll gauze for applying pressure to wounds, adhesive tape for keeping the gauze secure and latex gloves for yourself.



The Benefits of Dog Adoption

When wanting to bring a new dog home to become a part of the family, many people go to a pet store or breeder to pick out a puppy.

While that works fine for some families, a more heartwarming option can be choosing to adopt your new pet from an animal shelter or rescue organization.

Dog adoptions are a popular, affordable way to bring a new pet home, and they also help to solve a big problem in America: pet overpopulation. Whether because of abuse, neglect or simply the changing life circumstances of their owners, a huge number of dogs find themselves without a home at some point in their lives.

It's a sad problem, but it's one you can help solve.

VISIT THE SHELTER

A trip to your local animal shelter can be a great place to start. You'll quickly see whether they have any dogs that would be a good fit for your family.

Obviously, you'll want a dog that you'll fall in love with. Their size, behaviors and personality quirks should all be compatible with you.

Beyond that, you have to ask yourself an important question: are you compatible with the dog?

Consider where you live and whether you'll have the space, resources and temperament to take care of your new pet for many years to come. After all, you want to provide the dog's "forever home," helping it never experience the misfortune of abandonment again. And that's a huge commitment.

Some pets at the shelter will be fully house-trained and well-behaved. Most, though, will require some

patient training over time and perhaps even ongoing medical care. You should find out as much as possible about the dog before you make the commitment to adopt.

While some people assume shelters are filled with "problem dogs" that will be difficult to retrain, that's simply not the case. In fact, compared to buying a puppy — complete with all the months of gnawing on furniture and house-training accidents — adopting an adult dog can make for a much easier adjustment process.

RESCUE GROUPS

An increasingly popular option is turning to an animal rescue group to adopt your next pet.

There are all kinds of rescue organizations available to help match you with your future pet. Some are similar to public animal shelters with their own building to house dogs waiting for adoption, although most have a strict "no-kill" policy to avoid euthanization.

Many of them use a foster-care system to take care of the animals. Volunteers will take abandoned dogs into their homes until a permanent owner can be found, which can be a huge advantage if you want to know more

about your future pet. There's only so much you can learn by seeing a pet in a shelter environment, but seeing how it behaves in an actual home environment — and being able to talk to the foster parents in detail — gives you a much better picture about what to expect from the dog in your own home.

And if you have a specific breed of dog in mind, some rescue groups specialize in just one type of dog. There are rescue organizations for all kinds of dog breeds, although you may have

to travel to find one that focuses on the breed you're interested in adopting. A quick online search can help you find where they're located.

One of the most popular types of single-breed rescue groups helps find homes for greyhounds. There are hundreds of greyhounds used in racing that need to find new homes once their career on the track comes to an end, and these organizations help place them with loving families that will care for them into their old age.

Overall, there are plenty of benefits to pet adoption. When you adopt an adult dog, you avoid many of the problems that can occur when raising a puppy, and with some research, you'll know what to expect when you bring the dog home with you.

And, of course, there's the satisfaction of knowing you're providing a loving home to an animal that deserves it.



How to Choose a Pet Groomer

Pet groomers are essential for anyone who owns a dog or cat. Groomers can provide a bath or clip nails at critical times.

It is a little known fact that pet groomers can also help you maintain the health of your dog or cat. They are usually the first people to spot a skin disease. Groomers also clip hair around eyes and check your pet's ears for mites.

REFERRALS

Family and friends should be your first stop. They might know of a good pet groomer in your area. Referrals are a large part of any business.

Groomers are most often found in large pet stores, veterinary offices and stand-alone storefronts. You can find them through your local newspaper, Yellow Pages or online. Make a list of groomers that are conveniently located near your home or business. You will typically be dropping your pet off and picking them up later in the day.

VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS

Visit groomers on your list and inspect their shops. Check for cleanliness and professionalism. The service area should smell fresh and clean. The pet waiting room should also be free from debris and chemicals.

Observe how the groomer and staff interact with animals and customers. Nothing can be more difficult than a slick, wiggly pet, but a groomer should be gentle. He should never yell or jerk a pet around.

Are nail clippings and anal gland expressions part of the package, or do these services cost extra?

Also, be sure to ask about medical



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services. What happens if your pet has an emergency while they are at the groomer? Does the groomer have a relationship with the local veterinarian?

Another option is a mobile pet groomer. These people have a van with everything they need to groom your pet in front of your house. If traveling is inconvenient, mobile pet groomers might be an option for you.

BRINGING YOUR PET

Prior to scheduling an appointment, bring your pet to their office. Observe the relationship between your pet and the groomer. Are they comfortable with each other?

Of course, you know your pet the best. Tell your groomer if your dog is sensitive to having his or her nails trimmed or ears cleaned. Some dogs are terrified of the hair dryer. Mentioning it to your groomer will

put everyone at ease.

If you are unhappy with the way your pet looks when you pick it up, speak to the groomer right away. It might be due to miscommunication or your pet's behavior. Most groomers will be sure to fix the problem to your satisfaction immediately.

When you find the right groomer, you'll know it. Not only will they make your pet look beautiful, but they will get along well with both you and your pet.