

4. Once the information from the testing is recorded, effective symptomatic treatment is recommended to immediately control your pet's itching. Dr. Jeffers prefers animals be given oral medications that don't contain corticosteroids (i.e. antihistamines and/or fatty acid supplements) since the side effects are minimal; however, those who do not respond to them may need to be given corticosteroids to prevent suffering from their allergies. If you must give your pet corticosteroids, make sure you use the lowest possible dosage no more frequently than every other day if given for more than 2 weeks. Your pet will probably need some form of medication for at least 3-9 months following the initiation of the allergy vaccine. Dr. Jeffers will work with you in determining the best type, dosage, and schedule of symptomatic therapy for your allergic pet.
5. Although usually unnecessary, you may apply a corticosteroid cream (given at the skin test appointment) for three days following the skin test. This will help reduce any irritation which may have been caused by the clipping and testing.
6. A vaccine will be custom formulated based on the results of the allergy test. The vaccine is almost always available at the time of the skin test. When refills are needed, please call ahead to place a vaccine order. Orders are usually filled within a week. You can pick up the vaccine at our office or have it shipped to you at home along with needles and syringes. If shipped, the vaccine should be refrigerated as soon as it arrives to maintain maximum potency. The initial allergy vaccine includes three vaccine vials, while subsequent refills will include only one maintenance vial.
7. At the time of the appointment, you will be instructed on how to administer allergy shots to your pet. Most people choose to give the vaccine to their pet themselves at home, while a few choose to have their primary veterinarian give the injections for them. For the first 29 days the injections are administered every other day. Afterwards the injections are decreased to a frequency of once every 1-3 weeks. If beneficial, shots will be continued for the rest of your pet's life. Approximately 68%-85% of pets placed on desensitization injections will benefit from them. It typically takes 4-6 months of injections before you will see any improvement, but it may be as long as 9-12 months before improvement is noticeable. As mentioned above, medication must often be used during this period to keep the pet comfortable. If your pet has not appreciably improved after 1 year of allergy vaccine use, the shots will not likely ever help and should be discontinued.
8. The cost of skin testing is \$195.00. The initial 3 vials of allergy vaccine, which last almost 6 months, cost \$114.00. A refill vial costs \$110.00 and will last 20-30 weeks, depending on the injection frequency chosen by Dr. Jeffers (usually every 1-3 weeks).