## Dogs with Itchy Skin

A dog’s skin is the largest organ of their body. It’s also one of the first to show the effects of a food that isn’t completely meeting the dog’s nutritional needs. Veterinary research has shown that most skin disorders in dogs can be eliminated or reduced by changes to the diet. Eliminating fleas helps, too, provided this is done in a way that creates no additional sources of irritation to the dog’s skin

**Try something new.** Sometimes changing a dog's food can eliminate itching problems. Changing to a new food that doesn’t contain the primary protein and carbohydrate sources in the current food may be enough to get rid of the itch.
 **Only 1 in 20 itchy dogs is truly allergic.** Most veterinary nutritionists now believe that only about one in twenty itchy dogs is actually allergic to any of the ingredients commonly found in high-quality natural dog foods. For the large majority of dogs with itchy skin, the problem is that the dog’s diet doesn’t meet all of its nutritional needs, or that the dog has built up an intolerance to something in the food, not that the dog is allergic to a specific ingredient.

**Provide immediate itch relief.** If a dog is suffering from itchy skin, and a veterinarian has ruled out skin disorders or other conditions as the cause, a topical remedy may help. Some contain soothing botanicals, like aloe, shea butter or oatmeal. Topical treatments that include lidocaine along with the skin conditioners, can help numb the irritation.

**Consider supplements.** Essential fatty acids and digestive enzymes may help to reduce inflammation by providing digestive and immune-system support for itchy dogs.

**Has anything changed?** Some dogs have seasonal allergies to pollens and molds, just like people. Others may have contact allergies to things like wool or certain types of cleaners and detergents. Some dogs may scratch when they're nervous about something. If the itching is a recent development, and nutritional changes aren't helping, think about things in the dog's environment that may have changed around the same time that the itching started.