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Veterinarian compiles hit list of allergy-triggering pet foods

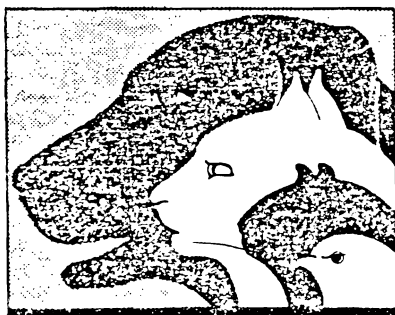
by Ranny Green
Times pet editor

It's no secret skin ailments are the No. 1 reason owners take their dogs and cats to veterinarians.

For years, professionals pointed the finger at fleas as the chief culprit. Now, they're beginning to look at what's in the food dish.

In a superb new book, "Pet Allergies: Remedies for an Epidemic," Dr. Alfred Plechner, a Los Angeles veterinarian, claims food allergies trigger furious itching and scratching by both species.

"The reasons why certain foods act as allergens," Plechner says, "are in many cases speculative. Surely, one can put forward the



PETS

You and your companions

argument that our pets did not evolve on the unnatural configurations of commercial food."

Plechner calls most commercial combinations "pure science fiction." While an animal may be able to accept a form of beef or corn individually, combining the two ingredients can be devastating. "Too much of any one food — such as beef — can overload the fragile system in a sensitive animal's gut," he says.

Another element — the season — is a factor, too. An animal may be OK in the winter but the same

Kibble — "More convenient. Less money. That's the positive side of kibble. After that it's all negative. . . . Kibble is the easiest form of food for the manufacturers to blend and hide inferior protein. . . . Kibble has long been thought to be one of the causes of feline urological syndrome. If fish or fish meal are listed on the label, this means that fish bones are included in the product. But bones contain much phosphorus and magnesium. Both can collect as gravel in the particularly narrow urinary tracts of male cats and create blockages. . . . Do you have an aggressive, frightened or hyperactive animal? I have often traced the problem directly to kibble."

Semi-moist — "Semi-moist is a horror story — the ultimate food fiction. Just read the label. . . . It's nothing more than the standard discards and fillers. . . . In my opinion, semi-moist should be placed in a time capsule to serve as a record of modern food technology gone mad. When you serve it to your animal you can never be sure if it will fill up or foul up his tummy. . . . I frequently find semi-moist food as the cause of common allergic or allergic-like reactions. My advice is not to feed it to your animal."

Canned — "On the whole, animals may be somewhat less reactive to canned food. The reason being that the contents are 72-78 percent water."

So what's the answer to this commerial pet-food quagmire?

Plechner, of course, advises clients of a hypoallergenic diet that averts adverse reactions in an animal, excluding foods on his allergic HIT (High in Trouble) list — beef, tuna, milk, eggs, brewer's yeast, wheat, corn and chemical

beans, brown rice, celery and carrots, with a tablespoon of soy oil.

Lamb and rice and chicken and rice head Plechner's suggested cat diet recommendations. Lamb- and chicken-based baby foods are also OK. Since some cats would rather fight than switch, Plechner offers several tips for tricking the fish-oriented feline into enjoying the change.

After following his dietary advice, monitor your pet's eating and behavioral actions carefully.

"If you see your animal getting better," he concludes, "continue the diet for another seven days. At that point you can continue indefinitely on the hypoallergenic diet, or, as I often recommend, use this diet as a base and carefully test

other foods that can be added to it.

"... Select a food, preferably one not on the Hit List, and add it alone to the hypoallergenic base diet for a week. If there are no signs of returning allergy you can assume that the particular food is tolerated."

Plechner's 130-page book, published by Very Healthy Enterprises Inc., is priced \$6.95, plus \$1.50 for

shipping. Mail orders should be sent to P.O. Box 4728, Inglewood, Calif. 90309.

■ Ranny Green's Pets column appears on Sundays.

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such as beer — can overload the fragile system in a sensitive animal's gut," he says.

Another element — the season — is a factor, too. An animal may be OK in the winter but the same allergenic food in the spring and summer may not be tolerated.

"If you determine a seasonal pattern you may do your animal a great favor by feeding him a low protein, additive free, hypoallergenic diet," he emphasizes. "That can free the weapons of the immune system to pour all their firepower on the insects and pollens at hand."

Here are some of his most pointed comments about the three most popular forms of food: kibble, semi-moist and canned:

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allergic HIT (High in Trouble) list — beef, tuna, milk, eggs, brewer's yeast, wheat, corn and chemical additives.

Without listing specific amounts (since Piechner and co-author Martin Zucker would obviously like to sell this book), his doggy diets include combinations of cottage cheese and rice, lamb and rice and a mixture of soy