



INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PET OWNERS

TRIAL / EXCLUSION DIETS



What is a diet trial?

Your vet may have discussed with you a diet trial or an exclusion/elimination diet. This is most often done to try to control issues with itchy skin (atopy) or for chronic gastrointestinal signs such as vomiting or diarrhoea. Sometimes these conditions can have an immunological component to them, most commonly a reaction to the specific proteins in the diet. Therefore feeding a different protein that the dog does not have an immune reaction to can alleviate the clinical signs.

What can I feed for a diet trial?

The most important thing about a diet trial is choosing a novel protein and feeding it exclusively. This means the new diet should be a protein that the animal has not been fed on routinely in the past, and should be the only source of protein in the animals diet. You can do this by feeding a "hydrolyzed diet" such as Purina HA or Royal Canin Hypoallergenic/Anallergenic, where the protein molecules have been chemically broken down, so they are no longer recognised by the animals immune system. Alternatively there are many diets now commercially available with less common protein sources as their single protein source, such as venison, rabbit, bison and so on. If feeding one of these types of food, check the ingredients to ensure that the protein source listed is the **ONLY** protein source, and try to pick a protein you have not fed your pet before. You can also make a homecooked diet, but we would only recommend this with the guidance of a veterinary nutritionist to ensure you are giving a well balanced diet that meets all nutritional requirements.

How do I do a diet trial?

We would recommend a slow introduction to the new food, as with any new food, gradually introducing it over a weeks period. When your animal has then transitioned to the new diet, this should be fed EXCLUSIVELY (ie don't feed ANY other foods. This includes treats and table scraps!). We usually advise doing this for minimum 6-8 weeks, as it can take a long time for old proteins to leave their body and stop any ongoing immune reactions. However, if their condition is food responsive we usually do start to see an improvement in their clinical signs before this.

What Next?

If you have fed the new novel diet exclusively for 6-8 weeks and seen a big improvement in your pets' clinical signs, this tells us that their condition is food responsive, or at least partially so. If you wish, you can then feed this diet for the remainder of their life, if it is a well balanced diet. Alternatively you can perform a "challenge diet" to confirm that there is a food responsive issue, and to try to identify the specific foods that cause the issue, by introducing one protein at a time and assessing your pet's response.

How do I perform a challenge diet?

You can introduce a former protein one at a time over a period of 7-10 days and watch for a recurrence of the previous clinical signs. Some patients will not respond immediately to an offending food, but most will develop clinical signs within a few days or even hours of the old food being reintroduced. This then confirms a reaction to that food, which can then be eliminated entirely from their diets. Following a reaction go back to the elimination diet for 6 weeks.

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