

“Surviving Springtime Allergy Season with Your Bull Terrier.”

Ah, spring. We all love it, every living thing seems to bloom and come alive. With it, unfortunately comes new plants, grasses, weeds and of course pollen. Other common allergens would be food, flea bites and insect bites. Unlike people who display respiratory symptoms due to their allergies, dogs most commonly develop skin rashes. Understanding canine allergies & their management is the first step in protecting your bull terrier. The second step would be knowing how to recognize them as allergies.

Skin is the largest organ of the body. In canines, it represents around 12-13% of an adult canine's body weight. That is why it is the primary indicator of allergic reactions. Allergens enter the dog's body by inhalation and direct contact with their skin. The most frequent signs that your bully is in the 1st stages of an allergic reaction is an area of redness, itching, hair loss, lesions or welts. These can lead to secondary infections if not properly cared for. Many animals will sneeze & have watery eyes. Your dog may rub its body on the floor, rub their face and ears, scratch themselves obsessively or they may chew and lick their paws and legs. If you see discoloration between your bully's toes, or under the armpit, or in the groin, it could be a sign of excessive chewing or licking. A reddish-brown stain results from their saliva. Allergies may play a part in chronic ear infections; always check ears frequently for discharge. Watch for poor coat texture, length or color and hot spots. In order to overcome these frustrating symptoms, your approach in helping them needs to be thorough and systematic.

Prevention is the key. I call it preventive maintenance. Following a few simple steps daily can help and will keep you informed of the condition of your bully before things get out of hand. Grooming your dog daily is the best way to know your baby's body. Brushing them will not only build a loving trusting relationship with your dog, but will help you feel and observe the first sign of a problem. This helps you to evaluate problems as they arise before it gets out of control.

Take a look between the toes: Does the skin look a healthy pink & clean? Or reddish and smelly? I have noticed with my own bullies this is the first place that will become red and inflamed when they have come in contact with anything that they are allergic to. Are their nails healthy? Is there a reddish-brown discoloration on the nail itself starting at the top of the nail bed closest to the skin while the lower part of the nail remains healthy and of normal color? This could be the first sign of nail fungus. Here are a few suggestions that you can follow that will help minimize and manage your bully's allergic reactions.

- First and foremost, feed a fresh healthy natural diet, non-chlorinated water and organic supplements to help build a strong immune system.
- Before going outside, spray your bully with an all natural organic bug repellent. I have used a

mist of white distilled vinegar successfully for years as a bug repellent.

- Pets are a major source of bringing allergens into your house. So, when coming back in, place a towel or rug at the doorway to catch dirt or pollen. A preventative dipping of the paws in white distilled vinegar and water will remove allergens. Dry between the toes and all over the paw area thoroughly. Do this especially on rainy days to prevent yeasty toes.
- An excellent all natural source to repel fleas, mosquitoes, ants, etc. in your yard is Mosquito Barrier and Diatomaceous Earth. Adding fresh garlic & raw organic apple cider vinegar to your bully's diet helps to repel fleas and other insects.
- Keep a clean home. Regularly vacuum and use an air purifier with a Hepa filter. Limit fabrics in your home. Allergens collect in rugs, drapes & upholstery. If fabrics are a big part of your décor, steam clean them regularly.
- Use hypo-allergenic bedding & pillows; buy laundry detergent free of perfume and dyes that is especially made for sensitive skin. Make sure your cleaning products are safe for pets. Be wary of air fresheners.
- Stay away from un-mowed grass. Ragweed pollen is more likely to be airborne in areas of high grass and weeds, as well as biting insects, fleas, mites and chiggers.
- Clean up leaves and other decaying matter promptly. It causes moisture, mold and is a breeding place for mosquitoes.
- During allergy season, avoid outdoor activity during the morning hours between 5am -10am. Pollen tends to circulate most heavily at these times. Take advantage of the rain. Right after a rain, pollen counts are down.
- Brush your bully when returning indoors & bathe frequently. This helps prevent prolonged contact to mold spores, weeds, pollen, etc... that may lead to an allergic reaction. A few medicated shampoos that work well are Malesab and Chlorhexiderm. A more natural approach would be a Natural Organic Colloidal Oatmeal based shampoo, followed by 1/2 white distilled vinegar and 1/2 water rinse.
- Benedryl and Claritin are very effective in relieving your bully's allergy symptoms.
- Epsom Salt soaks in the bath relieves itching and swelling.
- Be careful with the sprays and ointments you choose, they can be potentially harmful.
- Omega 3 & Omega 6 fatty acids are natural anti inflammatory agents. Fish oils, Evening Primrose oil and Borage oil are good sources.

The treatment of allergies should be approached by considering both Holistic and Traditional methods. A Veterinarian, whether holistic or traditional, will be a valuable resource to you and your family. Allergies cannot be cured. However, you can learn how to manage them. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

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