

PET ALLERGIES

House Dust Mites

The most common cause of allergy in the UK is house dust mites, they are very small and almost transparent. It is the faeces from these mites that cause allergic reactions. House dust mites thrive in warm, humid conditions, they feed on shed skin and hair from humans and animals, fabric particles and insect scales. The mites need moisture in the air to be able to digest their food, hence the more humid the environment the higher the population of mites. Total removal of dust mites is impossible but there are ways of reducing their presence.

- Vacuum and clean carpets, curtains and upholstery regularly
- Use a vacuum with brushes that beat the carpet fibres
- Reduce humidity in the house

Cat Dander

People and dogs can be allergic to cats. Cat hair is not the cause of the allergy but rather a protein which is present in the dander (flakes of dead skin) and saliva. Dander can become air bourn and cause irritation through direct contact or inhalation.

To help reduce cat dander:

- Groom your cat once a week, outside if possible or in a well ventilated room
- Wash pet bedding regularly, ideally once a week
- Wash your hands after handling your cat and before handling other animals
- Use Petal Cleanse (a lotion which helps to remove allergens from the fur) once a week, applying it to your cat's coat.

Storage Mites

These mites are tiny, white insects which feed on stored dry foods such as flour, grain and seeds. The increasing popularity of dry pet foods is leading to an increase in these mites. Two common types in the UK are *Acarus siro* and *Glycophagus destructor*. By storing and keeping foods correctly these mites can be greatly reduced.

If your pet has allergies and you are using dry food:

- Keep all food in a cool dry place
- Use resealable plastic containers, instead of the original bag
- Regularly clean these containers
- Buy smaller bags, more often to ensure freshness
- Wipe pet's mouth after feeding to remove any food dust
- Feed wet foods or a home prepared diet
- Always discard out of date food