



Grain Allergies in Bully Breeds

Overview

Many bully breed dogs suffer from skin problems and allergies that are caused by sensitivity to certain foods. Dogs that suffer from grain allergies often experience itching that can exhibit as foot licking, leg chewing or face rubbing. They can experience frequent ear infections and have redness and inflammation on the chin and face.

Switching to a grain free diet can help to alleviate or improve skin itchiness and irritation. When you switch to a grain free food you are giving your dog more nutritional value and his digestive system does not have to work as hard to break down the food as it does with grains. In the wild, a dog's main diet would consist primarily of meat, some plant matter and no grains. Dogs do not very efficiently digest corn or wheat (which are often staples of cheap commercial dog food) as it turns to sugar in the blood. Grain free diets still provide carbohydrates to your dog's diet through fruits and vegetables, so your dog isn't missing any nutrients by going grain free.

Many dogs develop grain-based allergies after prolonged exposure to a high-grain diet of two or more years. The reason for this is that as a dog ages, his digestive system has a much harder time processing carbohydrate ingredients such as grains.

Symptoms of Grain Allergies

Many bully breed dogs that suffer from allergies are prone to a buildup of yeast that actually starts in the digestive system. Foods that are high in grains and sugar can cause an increase in unhealthy bacteria and yeast in the stomach. Because yeast is an opportunistic feeder a buildup of yeast crowds out the normally present good bacteria in the stomach and can cause toxins to occur that effect the immune system.

When the immune system is not functioning properly the itchiness and scratching related to food allergies can cause secondary bacterial and yeast infections often manifesting as ear infections, skin disorders, bladder infections and reddish or dark brown stains below the inside corners of the eyes. Dogs with yeast infections are usually very itchy and may exhibit a musty odor. They may also exhibit skin lesions or redness on the underside of the neck, the belly or the feet (especially between the toes). Although drugs will temporarily treat these symptoms, they do not eliminate the cause of the symptoms. The best way to rid your dog of yeast and toxins and to prevent them from coming back again is to switch to a grain free diet.

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Treating Yeast Infections and Other Symptoms

As with any health problem with your dog, the first step is to consult with your vet to ensure that there are no other underlying health issues that need to be addressed medically. Ear or other types of infections should be treated medically following your vet's recommendations. Discuss with your vet your plans to switch to a grain free diet to ensure that all factors about the overall health of your dog have been considered.

Because yeast tends to build up in areas that are moist, you can provide some relief to your dog by using a product that is anti-fungal, anti-microbial and has a drying agent to clean between any wrinkles on the face and between the toes. Products such as MalaKet pads, Duoxo pads or Dermachlor Flush (this one can only be obtained from a vet) can be very effective. Take one pad (or cotton round) and start on the face. Wipe in the wrinkles where tear stains collect or any deep wrinkles on the face and muzzle. You can use the same pad to wipe between each toe. This daily regimen prevents yeast build-up and irritation from getting out of control. In cases where paws are swollen and irritated they can be soaked for 10 minutes in either warm water and Epsom Salts or a mixture of 1 part vinegar to 2 parts water.

If eyes are dry and irritated from allergies (this causes the red swollen areas on the face from excessive tearing) GenTeal Lubricant Eye Ointment Severe Formula can be applied. This is a non-prescription product that is safe to use on a dog and can be obtained from Walgreens or CVS.

For extremely itchy dogs, relief can be provided by adding one cup vinegar per one gallon of water and pouring the mixture over dog's skin. It should be rubbed in and towel dried. The dog may smell vinegary for a while, but it will help to stop the itchiness.

Switching to a Grain Free Diet

Switching to a grain free diet will help to get rid of yeast and bad bacteria in the digestive system. When introducing any new food, slowly add the new food to the old over the course of 1 ½ -- 2 weeks in small increments. Be patient, it may take 8-12 weeks for symptoms to subside. Be sure that no grains are introduced to the diet in the form of treats or table foods. You may want to consider adding a pro-biotic, a digestive enzyme or a spoonful of yogurt to your dog's food to aid in crowding out bad bacteria and yeast and in rebuilding good bacteria.

It is a good idea when switching to a grain free diet to choose a food with a primary protein source that the dog has never eaten before. This will help to reduce the chance that you are dealing with a protein that the dog may also be allergic to. Some dogs develop allergies to commonly used proteins in dogs food such as chicken or lamb. Since

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most commercial diets contain similar ingredients, switching to something new such as venison, rabbit, duck or trout will help to ensure that the dog does not have a secondary allergy to the protein source. Dogs typically are not allergic to foods they have never eaten.

What To Look for in High Quality Dog Food

- ✓ Quality sources of protein are whole, fresh meats such as lamb, venison, turkey, chicken, duck or trout. A whole-meat source should be listed as one of the first two ingredients.
- ✓ No meat by-products (by-products in and of themselves are not necessarily bad, but these second-class products are not handled as carefully as whole meat).
- ✓ Vegetables such as carrots, celery, sweet potatoes, spinach and potato.
- ✓ Natural herbs such as rosemary or parsley.
- ✓ Oils such as canola or salmon.
- ✓ No artificial preservatives (including BHA, BHT, or ethoxyquin).
- ✓ No artificial colors.
- ✓ No sugars and sweeteners like corn syrup, sucrose, and ammoniated glycyrrhizin.
- ✓ No propylene glycol.

Grain Free Food Recommendations

Grain free foods (sometimes referred to as Limited Ingredient foods) will typically have uncommon primary protein sources such as Duck, Venison, Buffalo, Trout or other Fish. Carbohydrates are derived from ingredients such as potato or sweet potato.

Below is a list of just some of the commercially available brands that include grain free options. Refer to the high quality dog food recommendations above when researching ingredients and be sure the product has a label that indicates the food is “grain free” or “limited ingredient”:

- Acana
- Artemis
- Before Grain
- Breeder's Choice Pinnacle Canine
- California Natural
- Canidae
- Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance
- Eagle Pack
- EVO
- Fromm
- Merrick
- Orijen

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- Solid Gold
- Taste of the Wild
- Timberwolf
- Wellness

Grain free options are widely available and can be found at stores such as Pet Supplies Plus, PetSmart, PetCo and local boutique style pet supply stores. Most dog food brands sold at grocery stores are typically not high in quality and most likely do not offer grain free options.