

Wheat commonly causes allergies in dogs and cats.

It's a myth

There is a widespread misperception that wheat commonly causes food allergies, so pet foods containing it should be avoided.

The facts

Food allergies are uncommon in dogs and cats.

- Food allergies constitute only a small percentage of allergy problems in pets. While the exact incidence is unknown, it is estimated that only 10% of allergic skin conditions are caused by food.¹
- Flea bites and environmental allergens, such as pollens, mold and dust mites, are more common triggers of allergic symptoms than food.²

Any ingredient can cause an allergy.

- An allergy is an abnormal reaction by the body's immune system to normal substances in the environment, including foods.
- Allergies can form to almost any food or ingredient, but the more animals are exposed to a food or ingredient, including wheat, the more likely it is that allergies will develop.
- Proteins, especially beef and dairy products, are the most common food allergens in dogs and cats.

- Genetics is also a factor in the development of allergies. Certain individuals are predisposed to becoming allergic to something, but no single food is more likely to cause allergies than another.
- The only way to truly diagnose a food allergy is with an elimination diet trial, which your veterinarian can prescribe.
- Unless it's been proven to be the culprit through appropriate testing, arbitrarily avoiding a single ingredient, such as wheat, won't prevent allergies from developing.

Wheat is a valuable pet food ingredient.

- Wheat is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates for energy, as well as a source of protein.
- Including wheat in a pet food as an energy source preserves the animal proteins in the diet for building and maintaining a pet's muscle and tissue.



Remember

Allergies to wheat are not common. And the only way to diagnose a food allergy is with an elimination diet trial, which your veterinarian can prescribe.

1. Outerbridge CA. Nutritional management of skin diseases. In: Fascetti AJ, Delaney SJ, eds. *Applied Veterinary Clinical Nutrition*. Danvers, MA: Wiley-Blackwell; 2012:157–174.
2. Busting the allergy myth. *PR Monitor*. Spring 2011:15–16.