

## **The Challenge of Feline Skin Disorders**

*Allergies to food or environmental factors can be hard to diagnose and difficult to treat. Here's why.*

One of your favorite things about your cat is her sleek, shining fur. Lately, though, it seems like your cat has been having a bad fur day. Nothing can be more frustrating and annoying than skin disorders. Nutritional deficiencies or food hypersensitivity; parasites; fungal, viral and bacterial infections; and environmental allergens can cause problems that range from dry, brittle hair and coat to baldness and open wounds. "Most skin diseases are simple and straightforward," says William Miller, Jr., VMD, professor of dermatology at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, "and common problems such as flea bite allergies, abscesses and ear mites are easily recognized, treated and resolved."

If a cat can absorb the nutrients in food and is being fed a nutritionally complete diet, food is probably not the cause of the skin problem. If a cat has abnormal absorption or a gastrointestinal disease, or is being fed nutritionally inadequate home-cooked food or unbalanced "people" food, the problem may show up either as vomiting or diarrhea or as skin disease. "We don't usually see both," says Dr. Miller. The more esoteric causes of skin disorders are allergies, and they may require some investigative work to uncover. "From a dermatologic point of view, we see allergic reactions more often than other skin problems," says Dr. Miller. "And you can't always tell if the allergy is to food, drugs, pollen or other sources."

Some cats have a genetic predisposition to allergic dermatitis caused by environmental allergens (atopy), and pedigreed cats have a higher predisposition than cats in the general population, according to Dr. Miller.

Although allergies may be caused by flea bites, grass pollens and ragweed, other causes may include food hypersensitivity. "Dust mites and storage mites in the environment can contaminate dry cat food," says Dr. Miller. "These pose no health significance unless the cat is allergic to them."

No Quick Fix. If your cat has an allergy, treatment will alleviate the signs, but don't expect it to go away. "Allergies are forever," says Dr. Miller. "They may go up and down in intensity, but they don't go away." Your veterinarian will help you decipher the cause of your cat's allergy and, if necessary, refer you to a specialist. Seeing a specialist may initially be more expensive — but it may save you money, time and frustration in the long run. "Some practitioners feel that skin problems are best resolved through a dermatologist," says Dr. Miller.

If your cat's diet is fat deficient, the addition of a fatty acid supplement may help. A combination of the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil and the omega-6 fatty acids found in cereal grains acts like a low-level anti-inflammatory agent, making a cat less inclined to itch and scratch by decreasing the inflammatory molecules in the skin and replenishing its essential oils. "They act like a botanical aspirin," says Dr. Miller. Although fatty acid supplements may be of benefit, they are not 100 percent effective.

Too much fatty acid can have an adverse effect, so discuss adding supplements to your cat's diet with your veterinarian and follow his or her advice on the amount. Some skin conditions improve when the cats eat a hypoallergenic diet targeted to cats with sensitive skin. Such diets have added fatty acids and vitamin E. If your cat has itchy skin, Dr. Miller recommends that you try one of these diets. "It could take seven to 30 days to detect a positive response," he says.

Special diets are more expensive, and although helpful to some cats, they may not help a cat suffering from hair loss or a genetic predisposition to allergic reactions. If you try dietary modification and see no improvement within 30 days, see your veterinarian. A veterinarian may perform a complete blood chemistry, skin scrapings, allergy blood tests or intradermal allergy testing to determine the cause of the allergic reactions. Once the allergen is identified, removing it from the environment is the first step in treating the condition.

If you would like to try feeding your cat a home-cooked diet, proceed with caution. Home-cooked food must be nutritionally balanced and complete to prevent other problems from developing. "If home cooking is done well, it can be very nutritious," says Dr. Miller, "but before you go off commercial food, have a professional look at the recipe to make sure it is nutritionally complete for your cat."

[http://www.catwatchnewsletter.com/issues/13\\_10/health/140941-1.html](http://www.catwatchnewsletter.com/issues/13_10/health/140941-1.html)

## **Key Facts about Canine Influenza (Dog Flu)**

### *What is canine influenza (dog flu)?*

Dog flu is a contagious respiratory disease in dogs caused by a specific Type A influenza virus referred to as a "canine influenza virus." This is a disease of dogs, not of humans.

### *What is a canine influenza virus?*

The "canine influenza virus" is an influenza A H3N8 influenza virus (not a human influenza virus) that was originally an equine (horse) influenza virus. This virus has spread to dogs and can now spread between dogs.

### *How long has canine influenza been around?*

The H3N8 equine influenza virus has been known to exist in horses for more than 40 years. In 2004, however, cases of an unknown respiratory illness in dogs (initially greyhounds) were reported. An investigation showed that this respiratory illness was caused by the equine influenza A H3N8 virus. Scientists believe that this virus jumped species (from horses to dogs) and has now adapted to cause

illness in dogs and spread efficiently among dogs. This is now considered a new dog-specific lineage of H3N8. In September of 2005, this virus was identified by experts as “[a newly emerging pathogen in the dog population](#)” in the United States.

### *What are the symptoms of this infection in dogs?*

The symptoms of this illness in dogs are cough, runny nose and fever, however, a small proportion of dogs can develop severe disease.

### *How serious is this infection in dogs?*

The number of dogs infected with this disease that die is very small. Some dogs have asymptomatic infections (no symptoms), while some have severe infections. Severe illness is characterized by the onset of pneumonia. Although this is a relatively new cause of disease in dogs and nearly all dogs are susceptible to infection, about 80 percent of dogs will have a mild form of disease.

### *How does dog flu spread?*

Canine influenza virus can be spread by direct contact with respiratory secretions from infected dogs, by contact with contaminated objects, and by people moving between infected and uninfected dogs. Therefore, dog owners whose dogs are coughing or showing other signs of respiratory disease should not participate in activities or bring their dogs to facilities where other dogs can be exposed to the virus. Clothing, equipment, surfaces, and hands should be cleaned and disinfected after exposure to dogs showing signs of respiratory disease.

### *Is there a test for canine influenza?*

Testing to confirm canine influenza virus infection is available at veterinary diagnostic centers. The tests can be performed using respiratory secretions collected at the time of disease onset or using two blood samples; the first collected while the animal is sick and the second 2 to 3 weeks later.

### *How is canine influenza treated?*

Treatment largely consists of supportive care. This helps the dog mount an immune response. In the milder form of the disease, this care may include medication to make your dog more comfortable and fluids to ensure that your dog remains well-hydrated. Broad spectrum antibiotics may be prescribed by your veterinarian if a secondary bacterial infection is suspected.

### *Is there a vaccine for canine influenza?*

Yes, an approved vaccine is available.

### *What is the risk to humans from this virus?*

To date, there is no evidence of transmission of canine influenza virus from dogs to people and there has not been a single reported case of human infection with the canine influenza virus. While this virus infects dogs and spreads between dogs, there is no evidence that this virus infects humans.

However, human infections with new influenza viruses (against which the human population has little immunity) would be concerning if they occurred. Influenza viruses are constantly changing and it is possible for a virus to change so that it could infect humans and spread easily between humans.

Such a virus could represent a pandemic influenza threat. For this reason, CDC and its partners are monitoring the H3N8 influenza virus (as well as other animal influenza viruses) along with instances of possible human exposure to these viruses very closely. In general, however, canine influenza viruses are considered to pose a low threat to humans. As mentioned earlier, while these viruses are well established in horse and dog populations, there is no evidence of infection among humans with this virus.

### *My dog has a cough what should I do?*

Schedule an appointment with your veterinarian so that they can evaluate your dog and recommend an appropriate course of treatment.

Source: CDC Seasonal Influenza <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/canine/>

Related Links: Influenza updates from the AVMA [http://www.avma.org/public\\_health/influenza/canine\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/canine_bgnd.asp)

## **Cancer Drug for Companion Animals in the Works**

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[MBF Therapeutics Inc.](#) (MBFT) and [Lankenau Institute for Medical Research](#) (LIMR) have partnered to develop a drug treatment for common and aggressive cancers in dogs and cats.

MBFT will have exclusive access to preclinical data from research being conducted by Thomas O'Brien, Ph.D., a professor at LIMR and Thomas Jefferson University's Department of Dermatology and Cutaneous Biology. Dr. O'Brien is a member of MBFT's Clinical Advisory Board.

The drug, called MBFT-101, is described as a combination of two drug molecules that act in concert to kill cancer cells by starving them of nutrients essential for cell growth and survival, with no effect on normal cells. The companies reported that the therapy is intended to be administered orally, at home, for four to six weeks.

A pilot clinical study using MBFT-101 is under way at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's Veterinary Clinical Investigation Center. The study, made possible through a grant from Ben Franklin Partners Technology Concept Network to both MBFT and O'Brien, is evaluating the drug in cats with oral squamous cell carcinoma.

MBFT will initiate a pilot clinical study using dogs later this year. The hope is to not only advance the development of new therapies for pets, but to set the stage for studies in humans, said George Prendergast, Ph.D., president and CEO of LIMR.

MBFT is a development stage veterinary oncology company in Ambler, Pa.

LIMR is an independent, nonprofit biomedical research center on the campus of the Lankenau Hospital in suburban Philadelphia.

Source: *Veterinary Practice News* <http://www.veterinarypracticenews.com/>

# Local farmers are rallying in support of efforts to create an Ohio livestock standards board

September 29, 2009

By GINGER CHRIST, T-G Staff Writer

The creation of the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board — a panel of industry experts that would set standards for livestock care — is outlined in state Issue 2 that will appear on the November ballot. The legislation was co-sponsored by two local representatives — Rep. Margaret Ruhl, R-Mount Vernon, in the House, and Sen. Bob Gibbs, R-Lakeville, in the Senate.

If approved Nov. 3, the board would be established immediately and would have the authority to set standards that would be enforced by the state agriculture department. “Over 15 percent of our employment is in agriculture. It’s a big business and we want to protect it as best we can, and we can only do that using people from Ohio,” Ruhl said during the August First Friday State of the State event in Ashland.

Jim Beattie of Ruggles Township, a farmer with 100 acres of land and a member of the Ashland County Cattlemen’s Association, supports the creation of the board as a way to keep power in the state and out of the hands of what he called “out-of-state animal rights groups.”

“It’s to create a livestock committee of professionals in the industry to take care of the way we treat animals for the most efficient use,” Beattie said.

The Cattlemen’s Association is planning to put up billboards and hand out fliers in support of Issue 2. Connie Braden of Loudonville, whose family has horses, cows and pigs, said the absence of an agriculture board could hurt the agriculture business.

“I don’t think that anyone has the right to tell a farmer what to do with their animals,” Braden said. Marcia Lahmers, Ashland County Farm Bureau’s Communication Action Team co-chairperson, also supports Issue 2.

“What this is doing is Ohio will decide what is the proper care for their livestock instead of out-of-state extremist groups,” Lahmers said. “It is the most important issue that Ohio agriculture has faced. If we don’t take this issue on ourselves, someone else will be telling us how to raise our Ohio livestock.”

Opponents of the livestock board say the board is an effort to hinder improvements in the animal care industry.

The Humane Society of the United States calls Issue 2 a “big agribusiness power grab” in information the group is disseminating. Paul Shapiro, senior director of the factory farming campaign at the Humane Society of the United States, said the effort to create a livestock board is a move to “enshrine in the state constitution the agriculture-favored lobby system” and is at odds with initiatives in other states.

“Many other states, including most recently Michigan, have chosen to involve all the stakeholders in a way to advance the issue forward in a way we can all agree on,”

Shapiro said. Shapiro said the Humane Society has three main areas of concern regarding animal care in Ohio: the confinement of calves in veal crates that prohibit movement; gestation crates in which pregnant pigs are confined in cages barely larger than their own bodies; and battery cages for egg-laying hens that keep birds from spreading their wings. Such practices are standard in the livestock industry and are not isolated incidents in the veal, egg and pork industries, Shapiro said.

Many local farmers, however, think most farmers treat their animals well.

“I think it will help clarify the management practices that most of us already use,” said Ben Hauck, president of the Richland/Ashland/Wayne County branch of the Ohio Farmers Union.

Jad Augustine of Loudonville supports the creation of an agriculture board as an effort to avoid future lawsuits and financial strain for area producers. He said the farming industry, like all industries, has a few bad apples, but, for the most part, farmers don’t neglect their animals.

“You have to take care of them if you want them to take care of you,” Augustine said. “There is more in it than making money. We enjoy what we do.”

Augustine and his wife, Carla Augustine, both work off the farm but have 60 beef cows, show pigs and contract feeder pigs.

Becky Croft of Creston, whose family showed open class beef at the Ashland County Fair, said the board would give farmers more control over industry standards.

“No farmers are going to do anything to harm their animals because they’re our livelihood and we love them,” Croft said.

The proposed board would include the state agriculture director; a family farmer appointed by the speaker of the Ohio House; a family farmer appointed by the president of the Senate; and 10 members appointed by the governor — a family farms representative; a food-safety expert; two representatives from state farmers organizations; a licensed veterinarian; the dean of the agriculture department of a college or university; two Ohio consumers and a county humane society representative.

Gibbs said the board will help assuage consumers’ fears.

“In today’s society, most people are two, three generations removed from the farm and they really don’t know what’s going on. Obviously, people are concerned about food safety and how those animals are cared for,” said Gibbs, a former livestock producer. “This initiative will bring great confidence to consumers.”

Ginger Christ can be reached at 419-281-0581, ext. 239, or at [gchrist@times-gazette.com](mailto:gchrist@times-gazette.com).  
<http://www.times-gazette.com/news/article/4677842>

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## **Michigan lawmakers pass farm-animal welfare bill**

DVM 360. October 2, 2009. Michigan lawmakers passed legislation that mandates housing requirements for veal calves, egg-laying hens and pregnant sows.

Last minute maneuvering -- reportedly spearheaded by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) -- crippled a Michigan Veterinary Medical Association-backed proposal to form a livestock housing board to monitor animal-welfare issues. This board would have been made up of farmers, agricultural industry representatives, veterinarians and faculty from Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

The new law will restrict housing for veal calves, pigs and hens by requiring that "any pig during pregnancy, calf raised for veal and egg-laying hen that is kept on a farm" be housed so the animal can lie down, stand up and turn around freely. Exemptions include research, veterinary treatment, transportation, at rodeos and state fairs, during slaughter and, in the case of pregnant sows, housing seven days before expected birth. Michigan farmers will have three years to comply with the veal-calf restrictions and 10 years to comply with the rules for pregnant sows and egg-laying hens. The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) -- involved in earlier work on the bill -- compromised on these amendments to block the possibility of an HSUS-driven ballot initiative.

Full story: <http://tinyurl.com/y8j53ft>

## **HSUS begins IHOP intimidation campaign**

According to Wayne Pacelle: Sometimes, our attempts at positive dialogue with a company break down and our last resort is a public campaign. While we always prefer to work cooperatively with businesses, on occasion even years of dialogue can yield no benefit for animals and it becomes necessary to publicly call on a company to do the right thing. That's why today we're launching a national campaign urging IHOP to start switching some of its eggs away from battery cage confinement to cage-free--a modest step that many of the company's competitors have already taken. Despite more than two years of private discussions, IHOP refuses to change the fact that all of the eggs it uses come from hens confined in cages.

HSUS set up the anti-IHOP campaign on their website urging viewers to call IHOP corporate headquarters and demand they begin using cage free eggs. HSUS continues by saying that since Prop2 passed in California (corporate home of IHOP), IHOP's refusal to use cage free eggs is violating the will of the people.

United Egg Producers maintain that well-run, clean modern cage housing systems have many benefits for hens as well as consumers. Hens in modern cages also are protected from many of the manure-borne diseases and parasites that affect free range hens. Researchers have discovered that free range hens experience just as much or more stress than hens raised in modern, conventional cages. Mortality rate in a floor (cage-free) environment can be double, nearly triple the rate in a caged housing system.

*In 2009, IHOP National Pancake Day raised \$1.3 million for children's charities and another that since beginning its National Pancake Day Celebration in 2006, the IHOP system has raised more than \$3.25 million to support charities in the communities in which IHOP operates.*

## National Pet Wellness Month



National Pet Wellness Month this October focuses on educating pet owners about wellness examinations, disease prevention, and pet health insurance.

The "Pet Wellness Starts With a Plan" campaign will continue through the year as part of the National Pet Wellness initiative.

Thousands of veterinary clinics now participate in the initiative. The AVMA and Fort Dodge Animal Health launched National Pet Wellness Month in 2004. This year, Veterinary Pet Insurance joins as a campaign sponsor.

The National Pet Wellness initiative has emphasized disease prevention and twice-a-year wellness examinations since its inception. Educating clients about

pet health insurance also fits into the initiative's mission. Studies have shown that, on average, clients with pet health insurance schedule more veterinary visits. Insurance is available for routine wellness care as well as injuries and illnesses.

Veterinary clinics can sign up to be part of the initiative and receive free materials at [www.npwm.com](http://www.npwm.com)

## NCRAOA Website Resources

The NCRAOA website is continually updated with reports, commentaries, education and legislative resources. The website is searchable with Google on the home page. NCRAOA carries links to:

- Current canine cancer reports from Cornell & UC Davis, Colorado State among others
- Spay/Neuter studies
- Feral cat guides
- Teacher resource kit for lesson plans from the Animal Agriculture Alliance
- Teacher lesson plans for the human-animal bond from Washington State People-Pet Partnership
- NCRAOA Animal Ordinance Survey, a quick guide to licensing & leash laws by county in NC
- Pet population studies
- Dog bite prevention information
- Commentaries on the difference between animal rights and animal welfare
- Links to low-cost spay/neuter clinics
- Disaster preparedness

**Link to NCRAOA and visit often!**

*Protecting your right to responsibly own and breed animals.*

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*For more information on animal health, training, reports on pet issues, animal sheltering, or to learn the difference between animal welfare and animal rights – visit our website at [www.ncraoa.com](http://www.ncraoa.com)*

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