

## Elimination Diets

### **What is an elimination diet?**

An elimination diet is often recommended as a way of identifying food intolerances. It involves eliminating certain food types or ingredients from the diet for 6-8 weeks and then reintroducing them one at a time to see if the body reacts.

### **Dietary History**

If a dog or cat is suffering from a dietary intolerance an accurate dietary history should be taken previous to trying an elimination diet. However, this is often impossible as many pet food labels do not state specific named ingredients. For example the ingredient 'meat' does not indicate to the owner what species their pet has been eating. It could be lamb, beef or even rabbit for instance.

### **Elimination diets**

It is recommended that an animal fed on an elimination diet is fed on a novel protein and carbohydrate source. This means that the animal is unlikely to have eaten these particular ingredients before., Duck, pork and egg are examples of novel protein sources. Potato is an example of a novel carbohydrate source.

**All** other foods, treats, table scraps and tit-bits must be eliminated from the dog or cats diet.

Pets can be fed on home cooked elimination diets such as fish and potato or chicken and rice or commercial diets can be used. If using a commercial pet food it is important to choose one with a single protein source (this means that it only contains one meat source rather than several meat ingredients). The ingredient list should be short with as few ingredients as possible. All the ingredients in the list should be named i.e. avoid diets which state they contain 'cereals' and 'animal meat'.

### **Results**

If there are no improvements after 6-8 weeks on an elimination diet then this could be for several reasons:

- (1) The owner did not comply with the diet and gave the dog/cat other foods and/or treats.
- (2) The dog or cat managed to scavenge or find food from another source.
- (3) The dog or cat is actually intolerant to one of the ingredients in the elimination diet.
- (4) The dog or cat is suffering from factors other than food intolerance.

If there are improvements the owner can then start to reintroduce other food items one at a time in order to determine what the animal is reacting to. Experts recommend that each new food must be introduced two weeks apart as some ingredients may cause a delayed reaction.

If your dog or cat manages to eat something other than the elimination diet (this includes some medications which can contain ingredients the animal may be intolerant to) then the dietary trial should be started again from the beginning.