



March, 2008

The official newsletter of Rio Grande Valley Golden Retriever Club, Inc.

It's time to get ready for warm weather!

Spring and summer is an exciting time for pets and people alike. The days get longer, and inviting weather beckons us all into the great outdoors.

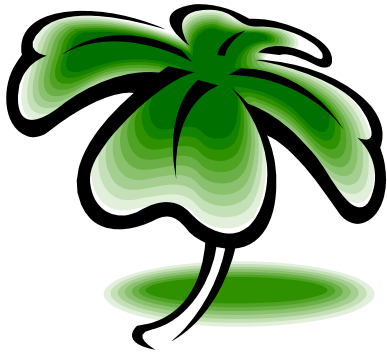
Grooming - A dog's coat helps to protect his skin from the sun and provides insulation from the heat. Your pet's coat must be well-groomed for it to serve its purpose. Regular brushing and combing to maintain the coat are important during the spring and summer months.

Exercise – Your dog can experience the same symptom as human “weekend warriors”. After a week of snoozing and the comforts of his home surroundings, your dog can easily over do it with a weekend play fest, a long hilly hike or a swim. Help your golden to “train” for these activities by exercising your dog through out the week. Find activities that will let your dog build its strength gradually. It can reduce soreness, stiffness and make the adventures worth while.

Heartworm Medication – The American Heartworm Society recommends year round prevention against heartworm infections but for those who choose a seasonal method should start now. Getting it into your pet's system early will greatly decrease the possibility of an infection and it helps in the fight against intestinal parasites.

Flea Protection – Take into consideration where your dog may go and his environment. Always protect your golden by over the counter flea protection products or natural practices.

Dog First Aid Kit – Keep your golden's health in mind as you would your own. We often have human first aid kits stored in a car or under the bathroom sink. Be ready to protect your pets as well.



Dealing with Dog Allergies

Dog allergies are very similar to human allergies and also produce the same symptoms as human allergies. There are 5 types of dog allergies: food allergy, flea allergy, bacteria allergy, contact allergy and atopy. Here are some basic facts about each of these allergies.

Food Allergies - The most common symptom of food allergies is scratching, due to skin irritation. Dog foods contain a host of ingredients which can cause an allergic reaction to your dog. Some of these ingredients are:

Meats: Beef, Chicken, Pork, Lamb, Fish, Eggs
Diary products (Milk)
Grains (Wheat, Whey) Corn

Most dog owners often scold their dog for scratching too much. Any obsessive behavior your dog demonstrates, such as constant scratching, chewing, licking, requires immediate attention. Never assume that this is just a new habit your dog picked up. Dog allergies can make your dog very uncomfortable. Aside from scratching, some of the other symptoms dogs can experience are:

Sneezing
Coughing
Eye and nose discharge
Itching around the anus
Hair loss

Loss of appetite
Pawing at their ears or head shaking
Vomiting
Diarrhea
Breathing problems

Isolating the allergen which causes the allergy is not easy because the dog is usually allergic to one specific ingredient in the food. Therefore, it is a matter of isolating that ingredient. You can try doing this with an elimination diet, which most people don't have the time or energy for. The elimination diet requires preparing specially-cooked meals consisting of a more exotic meat, like rabbit or venison, mixed with rice or potato, which wouldn't normally be found in dog food. An easier and more modern approach to test for the presence of a food allergy is to try a dog food which contains hydrolyzed proteins, such as Purinas HA or Hills z/d. Hydrolyzed proteins are broken down into molecules so small, they can't affect the immune system, which is what causes the allergy. If the allergy goes away while your dog is on this diet (which would take about 8 weeks), then he most likely is suffering from a food allergy. At this point, you would start to re-introduce the possible allergens one by one (individual meats, wheat, corn, milk, etc.) for a period of two weeks each.

If the symptoms return, it is most likely due to the ingredient being introduced at that time. You should look out for that ingredient on dog food labels in future purchases.



Atopy (inhalant allergy) - Atopy is the most common of all dog allergies, which is caused by environmental factors, such as dust mites, molds, house dust, human dander, feathers or pollen.

Signs of atopy include excessive chewing, licking and scratching at the face, paws, abdomen, armpits and genital area. Evidence of this behavior can be found in examining your dog's paws, armpits and genital area. Reddish-brown stains develop in these areas due to excessive licking. This may not be evident in dogs with dark coats.

Atopy is not easy to diagnose due to other dog allergies having the same symptoms. Once these other dog allergies (food, flea and contact) have been ruled out, your vet can proceed with testing for the root cause of the atopy. The most accurate method of testing for atopy is Intradermal Skin Testing.

There are many different treatment options for atopy. The best treatment would be avoiding the allergen altogether. If this is not feasible, other treatments include cool water baths with medicated shampoo, antihistamines, allergy shots, corticosteroids or a diet rich in Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids.

Flea Allergies - Dog allergies to fleas are not caused by the flea itself, but rather the flea's saliva. A common symptom of flea allergies is scratching at the tail area which causes hair loss, scabs and sores. Your vet can easily diagnose a flea allergy by checking for the presence of fleas in the coat. Fleas can be seen by the naked eye. Intradermal Skin Testing can also be used to test for this type of allergy. The most effective products for eliminating fleas are:

Advantage - Flea control for your Dog & Cat
FrontLine - Flea & Tick medication for your Dog & Cat
Capstar- Flea infestation on Dog and Cat
K9 Advantix Flea and Tick Medication (based on dog's weight)

Bacterial Allergies - A dog's skin normally harbors Staph bacteria. Usually, this bacteria does not have any affect on your dog but some dogs develop a sensitivity to it causing an allergic reaction. Your dog may develop crusts on the skin and patches of hair loss due to scratching, similar to ring worm. If these patches become infected, your dog will need to be treated with antibiotics.

Contact Allergies - Contact allergies are the least common of all dog allergies. This type of allergy produces swelling, redness, itching and hair loss. Common contact allergens include flea collars, plastic food bowls, pet sweaters, plants, grass or wool bedding. The best way to diagnose this allergy is if the symptoms continue after ruling out all other allergies. If this is the case, then you must pinpoint the allergen and remove it from your dog's environment.

This information is NOT intended to replace the advice of a veterinarian, dog trainer or pet care professional.

Article written by Nancy Settecasì

BRAGS



Announcements / Meeting Minutes

In order to reduce this size of the New Letter file, please see attachment for the January Meeting minutes.



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We are having a Fun Match! It will be held Sunday April 27, 2008 at Hoffman Park. We will need all club members present for this to be successful. Final arrangements will be made at the March Club meeting.



Garage Sale will be held at Mary Ann Bosworth's on Friday and Saturday June 6th and 7th. Club members are urged to start collecting items for the sale now! More details to follow.



Next meeting will be held on Sunday March 16, 2008 at the Hidden Valley clubhouse at 1:30. This will be a planning meeting for the Fun Match. For directions call Jeff Ramsey at 890-8479

Golden Birthdays



Justin!

Bailey!

Talli!



Willie Ann!

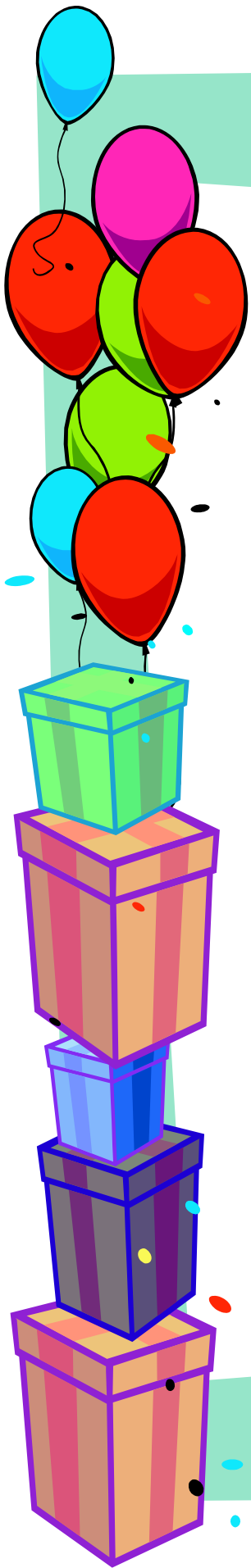
Caeli!

Caper!

Clancy!

Shadow!

Star!



Sandi Rogers!

Rebecca Swisher!

Kent Waterman!

Toni Ramsey!

Mike Schreiber!

Dianne Uzdawinis!

