



The 12-week food-trial log

Week 0: getting ready



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Dr. Steve Pelton, DVM



Chapter 9 explains the whole trial. Your vet may shift the weeks around for your dog; write in their plan, not mine.

Dog: _____ Trial diet (exact name and formula): _____

Day 1: _____ Planned end of week 12: _____ Challenge starts: _____

Recheck dates: _____

Week 0: getting ready (often a couple of weeks before day one)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Fleas controlled on every pet in the house, each with a product made for its own species and weight | ☐ Flavored medicines and supplements reviewed with the vet (probiotic chews and fish oil soft chews too) |
| ☐ Skin and ear infections checked and treated | ☐ Plan for when the itch medicine comes off: week _____ |
| ☐ Itch brought down so he's comfortable to start | ☐ Sign on the fridge, rules checklist posted |
| ☐ List of every protein he's ever eaten (food, treats, chews) given to the vet | ☐ Calls made: grandparents, neighbors, dog-sitter, groomer, daycare, boarding |
| ☐ Prescription diet chosen, and a backup if he won't eat it | ☐ Treat jar moved out of sight; new jar filled with the trial kibble |
| ☐ Heartworm and flea prevention plan decided with the vet (see the box below) | ☐ Starting itch score: _____ Starting photos taken |

Heartworm and flea prevention during the trial

Never stop it. A food trial is not a reason to go without heartworm or flea protection, not for a single month.

Most veterinary dermatologists switch to a topical product during a trial (Revolution or Imoxi, for example) to remove every possible flavor, though a topical isn't as good on fleas. Most heartworm chews carry very little flavoring (Heartgard is just a flavor coating), and for most dogs I'm fine keeping the usual chew; for a really bad case or a strict trial, topical only. Either way is OK. **Decide chew or topical with your vet before day one**, so nobody is scrambling when the next dose comes due in week three. Whatever you use, it has to be made for that species and that weight. Some dog flea products are dangerous for cats (Chapter 9 has the details).

My vet's plan for this trial



The food-trial log: weeks 1 to 12

Score the itch every day or two on the 0 to 10 scale



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Dog: _____ Trial diet: _____

A dash in a box is fine for days you skip.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Stools normal, soft, how many a day	Ears OK, smelly, red	Anything he ate that wasn't the diet	Itch medicine on, tapering, off
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											

Photo of the worst spot: once a week, same spot, same light. Tick the week when it's done:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12

Reminders, by week

- Weeks 1 to 4:** Don't judge it yet. Itch medicine may still be on board.
- Weeks 4 to 8:** Your vet picks the week the itch medicine is tapered or allowed to wear off. Don't stop any medicine on your own; some, like steroids, have to be tapered.
- Weeks 8 to 12:** Diet alone. These are the weeks you're really reading the result. Recheck near the end.

End of week 12: Starting score _____ Score now _____

Clear drop that held after the itch medicine stopped

Partly better

No real change



The food-trial log: the challenge

Up to 2 weeks, only on your vet's plan



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The old food goes back in, the notebook keeps going. Most food-allergic dogs who are going to flare do it within 14 days, and many within the first day or two.

Challenge food: _____ Start date: _____

Day	Score 0 to 10	Where	Ears, stools, anything else
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Result: Flared on day (back to the trial diet, call the vet) No flare in 14 days (talk to the vet about what else changed)

Facial swelling, hives or trouble breathing during a challenge is an emergency. Get seen now.

Single-ingredient tests, if your vet suggests them

One at a time, up to 2 weeks each, back to baseline in between.

Ingredient	Start date	Flared? yes, no, day	Notes



IS ON A FOOD TRIAL. NOTHING BUT HIS FOOD. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Ends: _____ Trial diet: _____

Nothing else passes his lips for 10 to 12 weeks. "Nothing else" means:

- ☐ No treats, unless they're kibble from the trial bag (or the canned version of the same diet)
- ☐ No chews of any kind: rawhide, bully sticks, dental chews, jerky
- ☐ No flavored chewable medicines without asking the vet
- ☐ No flavored toothpaste
- ☐ No probiotic chews
- ☐ No fish oil soft chews or other flavored supplements
- ☐ No pill pockets, peanut butter or cheese for pills
- ☐ No other pets' bowls (feed the cat up high)
- ☐ No kids' plates, table food, plate licking or dropped crusts
- ☐ No treats from neighbors, grandparents, groomers, daycare or the vet's front desk
- ☐ Heartworm and flea prevention keeps going, no gaps. Our plan: (circle one, decided with the vet before day one)
- ☐ Itch score written down every day or two (0 to 10)
- ☐ Itch medicine comes off in week _____ (vet's plan; never stop it on your own)
- ☐ Slipped up? Write it down and call the vet. It happens in the best homes. **One cheat resets the clock.**