

Surviving Allergy Season With Cats

ASPCA offers tips for staying sneeze-free throughout spring.

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Keeping a clean home and a clean cat are a few of the ways to minimize seasonal allergies, says the ASPCA. Spring is here, bringing with it a reminder of some simple ways for cat and dog parents to prepare for the peak allergy season, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Dr. Steven Hansen, senior vice president of ASPCA Animal Health Services, said that pets suffer from allergies as well as humans. But by following a few steps, surviving the springtime allergy season with cats and dogs can be accomplished.

Here are some guidelines from the ASPCA: Don't blame the cat/dog. Dr. Hansen suggests visiting a specialist to determine the exact cause of allergy symptoms and to help alleviate them. Keep a clean home. Be sure to clean the litterbox regularly. In addition, vacuum frequently, use an air purifier with a HEPA filter and allow fresh air in the home daily. Clean the pets, too. Pet parents are encouraged to bathe their pet on occasion in order to remove allergens that accumulate in fur. Brushing or combing pets frequently also helps to keep allergens at bay. Create an allergen-free room. Dr. Hansen recommends using the bedroom as the most practical choice. "It's smart to use hypoallergenic bedding and pillow materials," he says. "Allergen-removing central air and furnace filters are another smart option." If you do have pet allergies, keeping pets out of the bedroom can be very helpful in minimizing symptoms. Limit fabrics in your home. Allergens collect in rugs, drapes and upholstery, so do your best to limit them in your home. If fabrics are a part of your décor, steam-clean them regularly.

And remember — pets get seasonal allergies, too. "Dogs often get atopy, where they inhale allergens that cause excessively itchy skin, known as pruritis," said Dr. Louise Murray, director of medicine at the ASPCA Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital. "Medications and immunotherapy (desensitizing shots) can allow you and your companion animal to live happily together."