

Holsten

by Jonathan Jones, Veterinary Surgeon at Drove Veterinary Hospital



When Holsten first walked into my waiting room, I could see that he was miserable & unwell and all he seemed to do was scratch!

I have never met more committed owners than his; Holsten was certainly not neglected. They had tried almost everything to stop him scratching, but nothing was working.

When I examined Holsten I could see that areas of his skin were red raw and infected and that he had chewed out clumps of hair.

Our pets can be allergic to many things. Bites from parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites can often cause an irritation and this can lead to scratching. Spot-on preparations can easily control some of these mites but controlling dust mites in carpets, curtains and bedding and storage mites in food dust is not so easy. Basic ingredients in the foods they eat, chemicals such as washing powders and floor cleaners, pollens, grasses, trees and other plants (allergens) can all cause allergies. Consequently we tend to see most allergies at this time of year.

Holsten was routinely treated against fleas, ticks and mites, and they had also tried feeding him one type of food. Despite this he was still itching! Fortunately for cats and dogs like Holsten there are other things that can be tried. A blood sample can be taken to help identify what they are allergic to. Alternatively very dilute amounts of different allergens can be injected into their skin to see what causes a local reaction.

With Holsten we decided to take a blood sample, which showed that he was allergic to certain beef and pork proteins, rice, dust mites and certain pollens and grasses. Using this information, a unique vaccine was made for him and he began a course of immunotherapy and his owners also put him on a salmon & potato diet.

Although immunotherapy is cutting edge science it is available, it is affordable, and it offers a way forward.

Holsten gradually started to scratch less. Slowly and steadily he improved. His owners never lost faith and in the end their commitment and perseverance was rewarded. Before the treatment, he spent so much of his life scratching that he had little time for anything else. With the treatment Holsten got his life back, and his owners were able to spend precious time with him.

In memory of Holsten, who was put to sleep age 13 years, on 21st April 2011 when his hind legs gave way and he could no longer stand. He was a fantastic dog who did not have a bad bone in his body, he was so gentle, and if this article can give other people hope, then it truly is a fantastic tribute to Holsten.