

Saliva Testing Pins Down Your Dog's Food Sensitivities

Certain foods may not agree with your dog, or you might be baffled by his rumbling tummy, gas, diarrhea, or vomiting. This simple technology breakthrough allows you to find out exactly what is vexing your dog, so you can make him comfortable once again ...

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- In the second half of this 2-part video series, Dr. Becker talks to Dr. Jean Dodds, founder of Hemopet Advanced Canine Thyroid Testing and Canine Food Sensitivity Testing.

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published July 26, 2011.

Today I'm concluding my interview, via Skype, with Dr. Jean Dodds. Many of you have probably heard of Dr. Dodds. She lectures worldwide on clinical pathology and hematology, blood banking, immunology, endocrinology, nutrition, and holistic medicine.

In 1986, Dr. Dodds started a non-profit organization called **Hemopet**, which set the standard for veterinary transfusion medicine. Then in 1991, Dr. Dodds created the **Pet Life-Line**, which is a greyhound rescue adoption organization that physiologically feeds transfusion medicine. The doctor also started Hemolife at the same time. Each of these endeavors has achieved worldwide recognition.

Saliva Testing for Food Sensitivities

When we left off last week in [part 1](#), we were discussing an exciting new patented technology called NutraScan. It's a method for scanning saliva from pets (dogs only for right now) to look for antibodies in the GI tract against particular foods. In other words, it's a method of detecting food sensitivities and intolerances in canines.

What the NutraScan technology looks at is a dog's sensitivity to or intolerance of a particular food. This is a great tool to have for dogs exhibiting classical signs of sensitivity such as a rumbling tummy, gas, some diarrhea and/or constipation, or perhaps vomiting.

I asked Dr. Dodds if the NutraScan is a test that can be done preventively, for example on a young puppy — or does the dog have to be exposed to an allergen in order to test positive with the NutraScan.

Dr. Dodd responds that in actuality, most food sensitivities don't show up until an animal is around two years of age. Frequent and ongoing exposure to an allergen is needed for a response to develop. Because of this, testing puppies doesn't make much sense.

Dr. Dodds thinks we should start testing dogs between 12 and 18 months of age, and then yearly thereafter as a proactive tool. We know from human studies that three to five months before the GI tract reacts to an allergen, the antibodies are present in saliva. So as part of a proactive, preventive health program for dogs, it's a great idea to test saliva for the presence of antibodies.

I asked Dr. Dodds if the NutraScan can help dogs that have already developed symptoms. Dr. Dodds points out that 15 to 20 percent of dogs with food sensitivities have lesions on their skin. They have itching and skin irritation, but the real culprit is in the gastrointestinal tract.

For dogs that are already sick, even if they're on an elimination diet, a novel protein diet or some other special diet, antibodies in the saliva will still be present for many months after the animal was first reactive. Dr. Dodds' clinical trial database is now complete, and there are dogs that have been on special diets for over a year and a half that still show antibodies for a food they haven't eaten in all that time.

This means the NutraScan technology can give us a picture of what foods a dog has reacted to over a significant period of time. This will help us isolate foods that we might not assume are a problem, but that have indeed contributed to GI symptoms as well as dermatologic changes in many cases.

The Value of Salivary Testing

Dr. Dodds makes the point that her saliva testing technology is not similar to serum food reactive assays that test for 30 or 40 sensitivities simultaneously.

The primary food antigens are beef, corn, wheat, soy, eggs and milk. Those are the antigens tested for currently by the NutraScan. By the end of this year, Dr. Dodds hopes to introduce another 14 secondary food antigens to the program. She also has plans to expand the testing to include cats and horses.

I asked Dr. Dodds to talk a little bit about the skepticism of saliva testing among traditional medical practitioners, and why testing with saliva is potentially more sensitive than traditional IgE testing.

Dr. Dodds explains that IgE (immunoglobulin E) testing looks for food allergies, which is a different situation. True food allergies are rare. Much more prevalent are food sensitivities and intolerances. Intolerance isn't necessarily an immunological problem. For some reason a certain food interacts in a negative way with the GI tract and it isn't well tolerated. It's a food that should be avoided.

Salivary testing is well documented as a very important tool in human medicine. The tests Dr. Dodds does aren't available in North America yet, but are used extensively in Europe. The company her lab is collaborating with, DST — Diagnostics in a Drop, is in Eastern Germany.

DST introduced a handheld iPod-shaped device in May of this year. The device will be used throughout Europe initially, and will eventually be introduced to North America after regulatory approval, permits, etc.

The handheld device can be used by veterinarians, or even pet owners, to test saliva in less than 20 minutes. Then the device is put into a reader which quantifies the amount of antibodies against the specific offending food antigens.

This is really exciting technology, in my opinion. Many pets are getting high quality nutrition, but are still ingesting certain foods or ingredients that are biologically inappropriate for their individual physiology. NutraScan technology can help develop customized functional nutrition programs for pets.

Immune Function Testing

I asked Dr. Dodds to talk a little about the immune testing she does. I asked her if it's something she does at the same time she's checking IgA, IgM and IgG levels.

Dr. Dodds points out it's slightly different. She takes serum from the animal and checks the amount of globulins present generically, not just against foods. A pet deficient in one of the globulins, say there's an IgA deficiency, can inherit this problem which causes defects in secretory immunity.

This means the animal's immune system can't fight off foreign invaders, which results in chronic infections and other health problems. It's a different problem from food intolerance when an animal is genetically programmed not to make IgA.

Salivary tests for food sensitivities won't be beneficial for pets with these genetic predispositions, because they don't make antibodies. The immune system is genetically defective from birth.

I find this test from Hemopet very useful in my practice. It can be very frustrating to pet owners who are doing everything humanly possible to keep their dog well, without success. Dr. Dodds' immune function test is valuable in uncovering genetic predispositions in animals.

My Thanks to Dr. Jean Dodds

As you can see, Dr. Dodds has a lot happening at Hemopet and it's all pretty exciting! I want to thank the doctor for taking time out of her busy day to chat with me.

Going forward, I plan to keep MercolaHealthyPets.com readers updated on the latest goings on at Hemopet and other exciting work Dr. Dodds is involved in.
