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Scratching the right itch: Global PAWS report shows majority of pet owners are unaware of their pets' suffering during allergy season

- *Cats and dogs can be affected by the same seasonal allergies as humans, but 44% of owners do not realize pets can also suffer from allergies*
- *More than 1,250 owners in six countries participated in the Pet Allergy Worldwide Survey (PAWS), 46% of whom suffer from allergies, increasing sympathy for their pets' unexpressed discomfort*
- *80% of owners want to find out more about pet allergies; itchfreepet.com offers simple one-minute test to help identify cats and dogs that may be suffering from allergies*

Basel, April 30, 2012 – With allergy season in full bloom, Novartis Animal Health (NAH) today announced findings from the **Pet Allergy Worldwide Survey (PAWS)** report, which revealed that nearly half (44%) of pet owners are not aware that their cats and dogs can suffer from allergies, just like humans. In addition, 51% of pet owners did not realize that their pets' allergies are more likely to manifest during the human allergy season, a time of year when pollen and other allergens in the environment can cause distress and irritation for human and animal allergy sufferers alike. Although pet allergies can be present year-round, the spring allergy season can particularly affect allergic pets with agonizing symptoms such as constant itching, scratching and licking, and resulting skin inflammation and irritation.

“The Pet Allergy Worldwide Survey results highlight that pets can be affected by the same seasonal allergens, such as pollen, as people,” said Dr. Stephen Shaw, a veterinary dermatologist (BVetMed, PhD, DVD MRCVS). “It’s vital for owners to recognize the importance of the most common signs of pet allergy, including scratching more than usual, licking the same area excessively, hair loss and skin rash. Through increased awareness, the owner’s vet can go on to correctly diagnose the cause, reduce the pet’s suffering, relieve itchiness and skin lesions as efficiently and safely as possible, and improve a pet’s quality of life.”

The survey, conducted with more than 1,250 pet owners in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and US, revealed that of the pet owners interviewed, 46% suffer from an allergy themselves, the most common being hay fever. Most of those who have allergies felt more empathy and understanding towards allergic pets as a result. “I only suffer (from allergies) for 6 to 8 weeks a year,” said one survey participant. “Constant itching all year long must be very distressing for my dog.” Another pet owner said, “Hay fever really impacts my quality of life. I would hate for my cat to go through the same experience.”

Eighty percent of pet owners surveyed said they would like to know more about how to recognize and treat pet allergies. However, 43% admitted that they wouldn’t know how to tell if their animal was suffering from an allergy, and fewer than one in three pet owners were aware of one of the most common canine and feline allergic skin diseases: atopic dermatitis in dogs and allergic dermatitis in cats. To help, Novartis Animal Health working

together with Dr. Claude Favrot, a board-certified veterinary dermatologist (PhD, Dip ECVD) at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, developed one-minute online tests to help identify cats and dogs that may be suffering from allergies. Available on itchfreepet.com, the tests based on Dr. Favrot's criteria offer pet owners an opportunity to discuss the findings with their veterinarian.

"People with allergies know how miserable they can feel in springtime," said George Gunn, Division Head of Novartis Animal Health. "By raising awareness of pet allergies and providing a quick and easy online tool, we hope to help owners recognize the signs of allergic conditions so they can work with their veterinarian to bring year-round relief to their animal companions."

It's not surprising that owners want to do as much as possible to help their pets since 71% of pet owners consider their pet as part of the family. "My cats and dogs are like children," said one survey participant. "Whatever happens to them makes me suffer."

About the survey

Novartis Animal Health conducted the survey to investigate pet owners' awareness of canine or feline allergies. The survey was conducted online and took place between February 15 and 22, 2012. Pet owners from the following countries were surveyed: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and US. Within each category, approximately half were cat owners and half were dog owners. A total of 1,269 cat and dog owners completed the survey; approximately half had a pet with a diagnosed allergy (618) and the other half (651) had pets who have not been diagnosed with an allergy but may have signs of an allergy. This provided an appropriate number of individuals within each category to give unbiased results.

About canine and feline allergies

Atopic dermatitis is one of the most common allergic skin diseases in dogs, and is estimated to affect 10 to 15 percent of dogs. It is caused by hypersensitivity to environmental allergens such as house dust mites, pollen and mold spores, which stimulate an exaggerated immune response in affected animals and can lead to recurrent itching, scratching and licking and resulting in skin irritation or lesions. This disease is chronic, recurrent and requires lifelong management.

Allergic dermatitis is among the top ten reasons that pet owners take their cat to the veterinarian. It is also caused by hypersensitivity to environmental allergens such as house dust mites, pollen and mold spores. Cats with allergic dermatitis are itchy but, unlike dogs, it can sometimes be more difficult to identify if a cat is itching. Pruritus (itching) often manifests in cats as frequent grooming/licking, chewing and sometimes scratching. However, cats can be secretive and find a quiet place to lick and groom making it more difficult for pet owners to recognize the condition.

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About Novartis Animal Health

Novartis Animal Health researches, develops and commercializes leading animal treatments that meet the needs of pet owners, farmers and veterinarians. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland and present in nearly 40 countries, Novartis Animal Health employs approximately 2,900 people worldwide. For more information, please visit www.ah.novartis.com.

About Novartis

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