

New diet for cats that reduces allergic reactions in people

A DIET for cats that can reduce allergic symptoms in people has been launched in the UK.

The new cat food, described as 'revolutionary' by Purina, is coated with an antibody that neutralises the most potent allergen in cat saliva, preventing it from being transferred to the cat's hair when it grooms.

ProPlan LiveClear took 10 years to research and develop, and was launched last week.

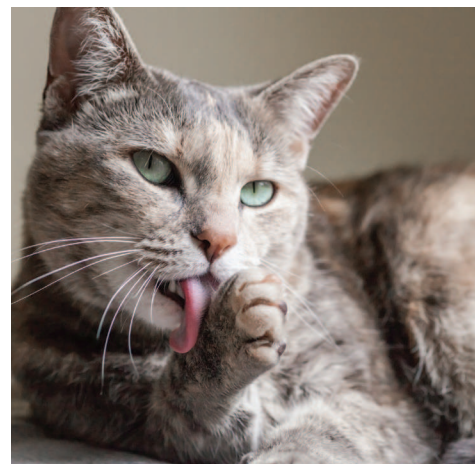
Sensitivity to cats is the most common animal-origin allergy in people, with an estimated one in five adults being affected. Sensitivity is often the reason why cats are given up for rehoming.

Although cats produce several allergens, the most potent is Fel d1 – 95 per cent of people who are allergic to cats are sensitive to this allergen.

Fel d1 is produced in cat saliva and sebaceous glands and is transferred to the animal's hair during grooming. Its small size and structure allows it to be airborne for long periods of time, making it one of the easiest allergens to inhale. It also easily attaches to fabrics, carpet and upholstered furniture and is difficult to remove from homes.

Speaking at a UK press conference on 16 June, Libby Sheridan, the company's veterinary and technical affairs manager, described Fel d1 as being like glitter: 'It is slightly sticky, and it gets everywhere – it has even been found in shopping malls and the homes of people who don't have cats,' she said.

Allergic pet owners often have to go to great lengths to attempt to reduce allergens in the home. This may involve removing carpets, frequently washing bed linens and vacuuming on a daily basis. People are not the only ones to suffer: cats may have fewer interactions with owners and restrictions on where they are



allowed to go in the home. In extreme cases, allergies may lead to relinquishment or even euthanasia of the cat.

Ebenezer Satyaraj, immunologist and director of molecular nutrition at Purina's parent company Nestlé, led the group that developed the diet. It found that coating the diet with an egg product ingredient containing IgY antibodies neutralised the allergen in the cat's saliva. The results of a 10-week allergen load reduction trial showed that the allergen-reducing effect reached significance starting in the third week, when the diet was fed daily as the primary food. This reduction continued to the end of the study, and the average reduction in active Fel d1 was 47 per cent.

The company recommends feeding the diet daily to get the full allergen-reducing effect, but says wet foods and treats can be given alongside it.

A symposium on 8 July will provide more detail for vet professionals on managing cat allergens and the human-animal bond. Register for the event at www.veterinarywebinars.com/purina