



Jeff & Laura McCracken :: 509.754.6171 :: www.desertwindlabradors.com

Labrador Retrievers and Allergies

Typically the dog that begins to display signs of loose bowels, vomiting, itching, hot spots, chewing of the paws, hair loss, dry skin, gassiness, or any other similar symptom is subjectively diagnosed by a veterinarian as having food allergies. The usual course of “treatment” is to change dog foods – usually to an expensive prescription food. Some vets will administer Cortisone and other medicines to ease itching and control loose bowels.

IN EVERY CASE WE HAVE SEEN, THESE STEPS ONLY LED TO TEMPORARY RELIEF AND DID MORE HARM THAN GOOD.

For lack of proper nutrition, the additional symptoms will be poor coat quality, odor, constant hunger (and therefore possible behavioral changes in your Labrador), changes to the dog’s organs, increased shedding and a compromised immune system. Vet bills WILL almost certainly go up.

If your dog is an adult dog and these symptoms appear while on a constant diet of a nutritionally sound dog food. **THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT A FOOD ALLERGY! Dogs DO NOT develop “later in life” allergies to the same food they have been successfully consuming, assuming the formula has not changed.**

One veterinarian manual states, “Allergy testing (for canines) is, at best, worthless”. (This particular article is referring to the blood test, but an increasing number of professionals are finding this may be true of the skin test as well). Even when “positive” responses are attained from testing, the results are thought to have little to do with reality. For example, dozens of dogs shown to be allergic to chicken thrive on dog foods which have chicken as the first ingredient.

Breeder Note: Our recommendations on dog food are found at the end of this article.

Should the medical field ever decide to pursue the possible cause of symptoms from dog food preservatives such as Ethoxyquin, they may find they are then barking up the right tree.

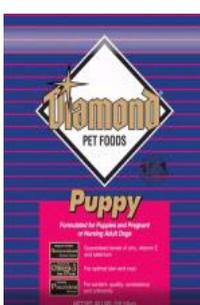
So what are the causes of the above symptoms? I will list them in order of predominance.

Labrador Puppy owners especially take notice – pups under six months are much more susceptible to loose stools for reasons one through six. Definitions: Soft stool looks like pudding. True diarrhea is the forceful projection of nearly all water in a stream, sometimes traveling up to two feet.

1. The number one cause of these symptoms is **human food** reaching the Labrador’s digestive tract. It is provided by neighbors, children, housekeepers, or relatives that do not realize **how little it takes** to have an impact on the Labrador Retriever’s system.
2. The second most prevalent on the list is **tree bark, plant material such as grass, mulch, flowers and dirt**. (The old myth that canines eat these materials to supplement a missing vitamin or mineral is just that – a myth. Dogs, Labrador Retrievers and all others, eat these things for the same reason we sit down to a piece of chocolate pie – it tastes good).
3. Number three is other **dog foods, store treats, and cat food**. (One milk bone has been shown to cause the dog’s intestines to react with lots of water to flush out the offending ingredients, leading to soft stool). Treats that are not designed to fit nutritionally can cause digestive upset. Do not use flavored toppings, additives, fish oils or vitamins if you are using a nutritionally sound dog food . It is unnecessary and will do more harm than good.

4. **Feeding too much dog food or too many treats** will cause loose stools and gassiness of the Labrador. Use a premeasured cup to give the right amount. The largest dog on our property only consumes two cups in the morning and two cups in the evening.
5. **Eating animal dung** is fifth on the list. Remember that almost all commercial foods and especially treats use sugar or high fructose corn syrup as an attractant and preservative. (This is not necessarily on the label). A Labrador Retriever at doggy day care may find the excrement of other dogs to be similar to our desire for dessert. The bacteria in this excrement will almost certainly cause repeated infections of the gut. Rabbit, deer and raccoon droppings also add to the loose bowels. Once dogs get in the habit of poop eating, it is difficult to stop, even when the sugar is removed. Labradors have also been known to clean up a human diaper.
6. **Parasitic infections** of the gut such as roundworms, tapeworms, hookworms, Coccidia and Giardia lead to reduced ability to make use of their food, leading to a breakdown of the skin and resulting in symptoms aforementioned. Giardia and tapeworm can be especially difficult to diagnose. Treatment for these parasites is not harmful or expensive, and will save the expense of testing.
7. **Flea and tick protection** applied topically for several months in a row can have an impact on the Labrador Retriever's skin and hair, as well as cause itching, paw chewing, redness of the skin, and lesions. Remember that you are applying a pesticide to your dog. Most vets will, of course, want you to use these products year around. This is usually not necessary, and as these chemicals build in the body, they will be expressed in the skin. Use these pesticides sparingly, only during months of increased tick or flea populations. Do not use products that incorporate flea, tick, and heartworm prevention all in one – especially an oral medicine! You are forced to give pesticides with the monthly heartworm prevention, needed or not.
8. **Insects, frogs and lizards.** Should your Labrador Retriever consume one of these tasty morsels, or even lick one, you may notice lots of frothing at the mouth. This is the chemical on the lizard's tail or frog's back saying "Don't eat me!". We see more of this from the state of Florida than anywhere else.
9. **Shampoos** such as dog or baby shampoos tend to dry out the Labrador Retriever's skin, especially if not properly rinsed. The best shampoo we have found on the market for dogs is Pert 2 in 1 shampoo. Make sure to rinse twice as much as you think necessary, especially under the legs and neck. Give a bath no more than once a month. Use an undercoat comb to remove the excess hair between baths to make rinsing more effective. We have great success with the furminator, an expensive but effective comb. (Use caution, as this comb can quickly cause skin irritations and sores if not properly used. When combing under the neck, sides or any area where the skin tends to bunch, skin can become caught in the comb and cause temporary skin damage with one stroke. Stretch the skin flat in these areas before pulling the comb through).
10. **Fabrics such as socks, underwear, collars, and t-shirts** cause immediate stomach upset or blockage. This type of problem will come to a head rather quickly. (Or, should I say, come to a tail). Most of the time the Labrador will pass these items out or throw them up. Sometimes surgery becomes necessary on the Labrador, should the item become lodged. One man recently found a fish hook in his dog's stomach, but only discovered there was a problem after taking his canine to the beach for a swim. The swallowed salt water reacted with the metal object, and caused symptoms serious enough to warrant an x-ray.
11. **Drinking salt water** at the beach will cause two to three days of intestinal upset. This will clear on its own until the next drink.
12. **Vaccines, antibiotics and the common cold and flu** have a temporary effect on bowels and sometimes the skin as well.
13. **New experiences such as travel, the excitement of an outing, or even visitors** can occasionally have an impact on digestion. While loose stools (a pudding like consistency) are sometimes unpleasant to deal with, they are not necessarily unhealthy for the dog. They can even be a lifesaver when it comes to flushing out the gut containing offending materials mentioned above. While it is possible to manufacture a dog food that "bulks up" the stool, it is not always best to feed to the dog.

The Dog Food We Recommend is Diamond Brand

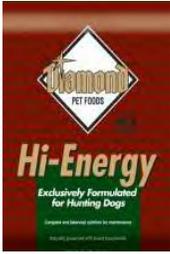


Diamond Puppy Formula

Ingredients

Chicken by-product meal, whole grain ground corn, wheat flour, chicken fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), beet pulp, egg product, flaxseed, natural chicken flavor, salmon oil (source of DHA), fish meal, potassium chloride, salt, choline chloride, vitamin E supplement, iron proteinate, zinc proteinate, copper proteinate, ferrous sulfate, zinc sulfate, copper sulfate, potassium iodide, thiamine mononitrate, manganese proteinate, manganese oxide, ascorbic acid, vitamin A supplement, biotin, calcium pantothenate, manganese sulfate, sodium selenite, pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B6), vitamin B12

supplement, riboflavin, vitamin D supplement, folic acid.



Diamond Hi-Energy

Ingredients

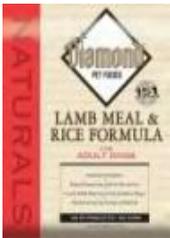
Chicken by-product meal, ground corn, rice bran, wheat flour, chicken fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), meat meal, beet pulp, natural chicken flavor, fish meal, vitamins and minerals



Diamond Naturals Lamb Meal & Rice Adult Dog Formula

Ingredients

Lamb meal, ground rice, cracked pearled barley, millet, chicken fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), egg product, rice bran, beet pulp, flaxseed, natural flavor, fish meal, potassium chloride, salt, choline chloride, vitamin E supplement, iron proteinate, zinc proteinate, copper proteinate, ferrous sulfate, zinc sulfate, copper sulfate, potassium iodide, thiamine mononitrate, manganese proteinate, manganous oxide, ascorbic acid, vitamin A supplement, biotin, calcium pantothenate, manganese sulfate, sodium selenite, pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B6), vitamin B12 supplement, riboflavin, vitamin D supplement, folic acid.



Diamond Maintenance Formula for Dogs

Ingredients

Chicken by-product meal, wheat flour, whole grain ground corn, rice bran, ground rice, chicken fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), beet pulp, egg product, fish meal, flaxseed, natural chicken flavor. Vitamins, minerals and chelated minerals.



For additional information about Diamond Pet Foods and to find a dealer near you visit their website: <http://www.diamondpet.com>

