

Control The Allergies, Keep The Kitty?

By Heather Reimer
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Allergies have broken up many happy homes.

Consider Desmond's story . His owner took him in as a starving stray, nursed him back to health, and even had him neutered. She's become very fond of Desy but has to give him up because of her allergies.

When severe allergies such as asthma attacks are involved, removing the pet from the home may be the only solution. But some people with milder allergies find ways to live with them. And that may be a lot less traumatic than having to say goodbye to a beloved pet.

Since cat allergies are more common than dog allergies, let's focus on them. Experts at the Mayo Clinic say the main cat allergy symptoms are sneezing, watery eyes and runny nose. But these symptoms are also present with other allergies like dust and mold. So before you banish your cat, get a skin test to confirm the source of your symptoms.

Pet allergies aren't caused by the fur itself but by the dander – dead skin cells – and dried saliva. So start with a thorough and frequent cleaning of carpets, floors and furniture to control the amount of dander flying around. Also:

- Designate a pet-free zone (like a bedroom) so there will be one space free of dander.
- Use allergen-resistant bedding.
- Wash clothes frequently.
- If your cat will allow it, bathe him once or twice weekly with a dander-reducing shampoo.
- Wash hands after playing with pets.
- Consider swapping carpets for flooring, curtains for blinds, and fabric furniture for smooth upholstery.
- Use HEPA filters in air vents and vacuums to trap allergens.
- Invest in a good air purifier.
- Explore new products like pet allergy wipes and pet brushes that remove dander.

If nothing works and you have to rehome your cat, visit: <http://geocities.com/virdenpetnet> for a free online listing.

ATTENTION CAT LOVERS: Do you have room in your home and your heart to foster a cat or kitten until its adoption? The Virden Pet Network is compiling a list of foster volunteers. Contact us at 748 6677 or email virdenpetnet@yahoo.ca