Allergic itch in dogs is a frequent reason that clients send messages, ask questions, and schedule appointments. We know that allergic itch can affect the patient’s quality of life and the human-animal bond. **So, why are 7 out of 10 veterinarians and veterinary healthcare teams continuing to recommend ineffective over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines for dogs?**2

**Been there, tried that—clients have already attempted OTC treatment**

By the time a client brings their dog in for veterinary care, 88% have already tried at least one OTC treatment with some trying as many as 15.1 And despite their own numerous at-home treatment efforts they’re sitting in your exam room or phoning your practice. Thus, the validity of OTC treatments including antihistamines, for allergic itch should receive closer scrutiny. Antihistamines can relieve respiratory allergies in humans but are often not effective at reducing allergic itch in dogs3-6

**The truth about OTC antihistamines for canine allergic itch**

A 1999 publication in the *Journal of Small Animal Practice,* reviewed the efficacy of various antihistamines from previously published studies in dogs with allergic dermatitis.6 The highest percentage of dogs demonstrating a positive response was in the cetirizine group—a dismal 15% that was less than placebo. Other popular OTC antihistamine options reported from other studies fell far below this already low-set bar, and included:

* **Chlorpheneramine (Chlortrimeton®)** — 8.9% to 10%
* **Clemastine (Tavist®)** — 10%
* **Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®)** — 6.7%
* **Hydroxyzine (Atarax®)** — 6.7% to 10%
* **Loratadine (Claritin®)** — Zero percent

In another double-blinded, placebo-controlled study published in the *Journal of Veterinary Science* in 2016, 85% of dogs receiving cetirizine showed no improvement, or their condition worsened during the two-week regimen—making this antihistamine no better than the placebo.3