FIGURE 1
Diagnosing Allergic Skin Disease in the Canine Patient

Presentation of dog: Skin lesions +/- pruritus → STEP 1: Clinical History and Dermatologic Physical Examination (skin AND ears) → STEP 2: MDB (skin scraping, skin cytology, +/- ear cytology)

STEP 3: Treat Pruritus (+/- oral glucocorticoid, oclacitinib, or lokivetmab, depending on severity)

STEP 4: Treat Secondary Infections, Ectoparasites, and OE

STEP 5: Recheck

Complete response AND no return of pruritus after medications stopped

Partial or no response OR return of pruritus after medications stopped

Ectoparasites were cleared vs seasonal atopy vs resolution of secondary skin infections due to primary endocrinopathy

STEP 6: Diet Trial

Complete response

Partial response

No response

Pruritus when diet is challenged

Consider food allergy concurrent with atopy. Continue diet trial while treating for atopy.

Treat for atopy, recheck MDB.

Treat for atopy

MDB, minimum dermatologic database; OE, otitis externa

The 2023 AAHA Management of Allergic Skin Diseases Guidelines are available at aaha.org/allergic-diseases.

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2023 AAHA.