**My breeding program is a carefully thought out process.  Let me assure you   that I am very careful not to breed skin problems into my line of Westies.  There have been very few reports from my Westie families of skin problems over the years. As a professional groomer from 1987 to 2003 I have seen skin issues in MANY, MANY breeds.**

**If your Westie has several episodes of skin problems or issues I recommend the first step to take is to have the allergens identified by a blood test.  Once the allergens are identified an antigen (antidote) can be developed for relief of the offending allergy.  This is the most aggressive and successful treatment verses the following recommendation.**

**Diagnosis is a process of elimination. Many skin diseases have similar symptoms, and each must be evaluated and ruled out before a final diagnosis can be made. It may take a few visits, but your veterinarian should be able to isolate the problem and develop a management plan. To help determine the problem, your veterinarian may recommend laboratory work, skin scrapings, and blood tests.  You can help by observing your pet’s coat /skin as you make or implement changes and reporting the results to your veterinarian. Each change that you make needs to have time to exit or enter your dog’s system. I recommend making one change at a time and waiting two to three months to see the effect that the change has whether it be taking something away or introducing something new.**

**“Below is a list of some the most common allergies”**

**Fleas are at the top of my list. If your dog has an allergy to fleas’ one flea bite can send them into an itching frenzy.  A good flea prevention program is a must.  Don’t wait until you see a flea before starting the program.  In the event of a flea bite with an allergic reaction inflammation of the skin may develop. Even after the fleas are gone treatment for the inflammation may be needed.**

**Allergic reaction to food can also cause skin problems.  A diagnosis of a food allergy will take time because it is a diagnosis of exclusion.  Your veterinarian may recommend a special diet restricted to a few simple proteins you dog has unlikely ever eaten (e.g. lamb).  If this does the trick, ingredients can then be added back into the diet one at a time until the culprit is discovered.  During this time, it is important that you do not give ANY treats that your veterinarian has not approved.  Even VERY SMALL quantities of the offending ingredient can trigger the allergic reaction.  Food allergies can develop over time, even in pets that have been eating their regular diet.**