General Tips for Navigating a Maze (Including the “Maze of Allergies”)

As we walk through the metaphoric maze of allergies, each turn – every diagnostic challenge and each selection of medicines or methods to use at the time – offers a choice that must be made. Each choice either leads to the way out of the maze (the cure), or down false pathways into blind alleys where we can get lost forever. The only way we will ever know is to try the pathway and see where it takes us.

As you walk the maze of allergy diagnosis and cure with your dog, keep the following labyrinth-solving strategies in mind.

■ Every maze is different. This is what makes maze-walking such an adventure. But when the maze is your dog’s allergic condition, the challenge of finding the correct healing protocol for your dog can become frustrating and downright discouraging.

■ Pathways often defy logic. In a maze you may need to initially go “left” when you know the ultimate way out is to the “right” side of the maze. In therapeutic terms, this means that we may need to try a medicine or method that doesn’t seem to make sense in order to get on the right pathway to healing.

■ In or out? Every choice you make has the potential of taking you deeper into the maze – or the pathway you’ve selected may be the way out. And since each turn of the maze is a blind one, you may not know which way you are heading until you finally (we hope) see the light at the outside of the maze.

■ Don’t go in circles. Occasionally, you may need to re-trace your steps and your decisions. But, unless you want to become totally confused and frustrated, don’t continue going round and round in the same place, making the same decisions/mistakes.

■ Don’t panic. Remember that, while the therapeutic pathway you have chosen may seem to be taking you deeper and deeper into the maze, it may also be the correct pathway out. You’ll never know until you walk it to the end of the pathway it has created.

■ Look for and listen to subtle clues. I can’t tell you the number of times an animal’s caretaker has suggested a medicine that I would never have thought of, or one that I had no way of thinking would ever work on any disease. Or the number of times an animal’s caretaker has kindly suggested that she did not think what we were doing was working, and that maybe we should try something else. I hate to admit it, but if these “suggestions” have come from the heart, from subtle clues the caretaker was somehow privy to, then they often lead us in the right direction. Bottom line: Listen to your heart.