

Dreaming of hypoallergenic cats and how CRISPR could ‘come to the rescue’

Given that just two genes are responsible for making cats a problem for many people, it seemed like a no-brainer to engineer cats that lacked those genes, or to simply breed cats with versions of the genes that made the animals less allergenic.

But so far, itchy-eyed cat lovers have been left disappointed.

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But for all those who haven’t given up hope, there may be new options around the corner. An allergic owner might pop open a can of allergy-fighting food — for the cat. Or maybe vaccinate the cat to produce fewer allergens. And allergy shots for owners might shift from burdensome weekly or monthly injections to a shot that offers immediate relief.

The new gene-editing technology called [CRISPR/Cas9](#) might even come to the rescue, delivering the ultimate dream to those who can afford it: a cat that doesn’t produce allergens at all. One company has made some progress applying CRISPR/Cas9 to cats.

Success in taming cat allergies could bring good news for people whose allergies have nothing to do with cats. If any of the cat allergy-fighting measures prove safe and effective, they could be deployed against other allergens, especially airborne ones like pollen, dog dander or dust mites.

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