

## EAR INFECTIONS

Otitis means ear inflammation or infection. When this occurs in the ear canal (horizontal or vertical) or the visible external regions are called otitis externa. When present in deeper areas and when the ear drum is ruptured, it is referred to as otitis media. When an ear infection has been going on for a long time or if there is a large amount of discharge in the canal, it is likely that an otitis media is present, this can only be determined for certain by looking down the ear canal using a special instrument called an otoscope.

Many factors and diseases can create an environment in the ear canal and allow bacteria and/or yeast to grow there. Small amounts of bacteria and yeast are always present in the ear canals, so something has to happen to encourage them to grow. When an infection has been present for a long time, the ear canal itself is damaged and responds by thickening (and closing down) and can also have ulcers. If this happens, these make the problem even worse.

Some of the more common causes of otitis include:

- I. Allergies - especially atopy and food allergy
2. Metabolic problems - seborrhea Of hormonal problems
3. Medication reactions
4. Swimmers ear
5. Parasites
6. Foreign bodies
7. Otitis media - if this is not completely resolved the infection can continue to recur
8. Proliferative tissue responses (thickened/damaged ear canal from long term infection)
9. Autoimmune diseases
- IO. Conformational problems
- II. Polyps/ tumors

Our goal to help your pet's ear problem will be to:

- I. Find the actual Underlying cause
2. Treat any secondary infections present
3. Detect and attempt to reverse proliferative tissue responses, if possible
4. Clean the ears thoroughly and control middle ear problems
5. Stop the inflammation

If we can not eliminate the actual cause, then we will develop a maintenance program so you can keep your pet's ears in the best possible condition. In some cases this may require surgery.

Initial and repeated cleanings of various parts of the ear canal are often needed. This is especially true with otitis media and when proliferative tissue is present. This may involve the use of flushes, medications, tubes, and middle ear flushes to clean out deeper portions of the canal.

## CLEANING/ MEDICATING

The ear canal of animals has two portions that form an "L" shape. The vertical portion goes down, and the horizontal portion goes in (people only have this horizontal portion that goes straight in).

Proper cleaning is essential to treat the ears.

1. Lift the ear flap to expose the ear canal

2. Squeeze about 1 ounce (this can be difficult to measure, so approximate as best you can) of the cleaning solution into the ear canal. Another way to do this is to saturate a cotton ball with cleaner, then wring out the cotton ball over the opening to the ear canal

3. Fold the ear lengthwise on itself and gently massage the portion of the ear where the vertical and the horizontal ear canal meet. This should make a 'squishy' noise as the ear cleaner loosens the debris. After about 30 seconds, let the pet shake out the debris that you have loosened. A towel can be put over the head if there is a large amount of debris. This procedure may need to be repeated several times to loosen as much discharge as possible.

4. Discharge present around the ear canal opening can be gently removed with soft cotton

5. After cleaning, wait 5-10 minutes and apply ear medications as directed

\* Remember that cotton tip applicators should never be used since material in the canal can be pushed down and create an impaction

\*\* If discomfort increases or if there is any notable change in the ear canal or discharge notify our office. Reaction to medications are uncommon, but can occur in any animal. New infections (caused by different organisms) can also occur.

