

## Ear Problems

### What is it about EARS?

Ear problems are one of the most common (and one of the most frustrating) medical conditions of dogs and cats.

The external ear canal is a dark, tortuous, poorly ventilated region of the body...which makes a perfect hiding place for bacteria, yeast, mites and foreign bodies. In fact, over 80% of ear problems occur in drop-eared dog breeds compared to erect ear dog breeds. Mother nature did a better job when designing cat ears: they are small and erect - so they dry out better and provide less favorable conditions for bacteria and yeast.

### How do I know that there is a problem?

Possible signs that your pet has an ear problem:

- Head shaking
- Scratching / rubbing ears
- Pain around head or ears (cries or whines)
- A bad odor or smell
- Behavior change- irritable or aggressive from pain
- Other pets in the house lick the pet's ears
- Loss of hearing

All potential ear problems should be examined by a veterinarian prior to treatment. Since there are many potential causes of ear problems, an examination of the animal and the ears is imperative. Cytology swabs or cultures are often done to help determine the cause of the ear problem.

The top three reasons why your pet should always be examined before you are tempted to use up some old medication you found from a previous ear problem.

- 1 Many ear medications are detrimental to your pet if the eardrum is ruptured.
- 2 There are a variety of causes of ear conditions- it may not be the "same as last time".
- 3 Indiscriminate use of ear medications can cause bacteria to be resistant to the antibiotics and worsen the problem.

Also, chronic or recurrent ear problems should be evaluated for underlying causes or contributing factors.

Many medical conditions can manifest (at least in part) as ear problems - hypothyroidism, allergies, autoimmune disorders, keratinization disorders or other systemic diseases. If these primary causes are not addressed, the ear condition will eventually

return.

Ear problems should not be ignored. Besides your pet being very uncomfortable, (and the scratching or head shaking can keep you awake at night), chronic conditions are much more difficult and expensive to fix!!

### Basic Do's & Don'ts of Home Ear Care

- 1 Ears should only be cleaned with specially designed pet ear cleaners. Many other products can be irritating or painful and cause problems!!
- 2 Excessive cleaning can rob the ear of normal wax needed to maintain healthy ears.
- 3 Too little ear cleaning can promote dirt build-up and infections.
- 4 Never use cotton tip applicators down in the ear - you can push dirt further down or injure the eardrum. Only use cotton balls or cotton pads.
- 5 Cotton balls should be placed in ear canals prior to bathing so water does not invade the ear canals.
- 6 Always groom under ear flaps, especially after running in tall grass, weeds or brush. Plant material can enter the ear and cause irritation or infection.
- 7 Hair should not be plucked from ears unless it is interfering with air circulation. Serum can ooze from the hair pores and cause an infection.

Happy hearing!!