

OTITIS EXTERNA IN YOUR DOG



DID YOU KNOW: Dog-ears are capable to locate more than 35,000 vibrations every second? Technically, their hearing power is 75% stronger than human. Normally, humans are only capable to register 20,000 vibrations per second.

Frequent head shaking, ear scratching, hair loss, inflammation, excess waxy secretions, delayed response to commands and problems in maintaining positional equilibrium are some common signs of dog ear problems

Otitis externa or inflammation of the external ear canal and ear flap is the most common disease condition of the external ear canal in dogs with a prevalence rate of 5 – 20%. Allergic disease plays a large role in the cause of this condition. This is suspected to be due to a high amount of mast cells in the ear. Dogs with long hanging ears and those with abundantly hairy canals especially poodles spaniels and Labradors are over represented.

Unfortunately a dog diagnosed with otitis externa does not indicate an underlying cause and symptomatic treatment without addressing the cause runs the risk of relapses or recurrences.

Causes of otitis externa



The causes of otitis externa have been divided into primary factors (those factors directly inciting the condition), predisposing factors (those factors placing the animal at risk for the condition) and perpetuating factors (factors preventing the condition from resolving). It can be seen that unless the primary factors are addressed the disease will persist, despite judicious treatment of perpetuating causes.

- Primary factors
 - Parasites (ear mites and ticks)
 - Foreign bodies (grass awns and seeds)
 - Autoimmune (very rare)
 - Hypersensitivity (allergy)
 - These are considered most important cause of persistent otitis externa. Food allergy may manifest solely in the ear canal making its diagnosis very difficult.

- Perpetuating conditions
 - Bacteria
 - Malassezia yeast infection
 - Progressive pathological changes (narrowing of the ear canal)
- Predisposing conditions
 - Ear canal conformation
 - Ear canal maceration or wetting
 - Anal sac disease (very rare)



Treatments

Treatment plan for allergic Otitis externa

Controlling the perpetuating factors. Making use of anti-inflammatory agents either topical or systemically until such time as the inflammation has resolved then switching to alternate day therapy. Occasional disinfectant or stronger may be needed especially when prophylactic treatments are temporarily discontinued.

Treatment plan for chronic otitis externa

Control perpetuating factors with appropriate agents. Long term home flushing at weekly, bimonthly or monthly intervals. Clean the external ear flap with topical antiseborrheic tar shampoos. Once or twice weekly applying drying, mildly anti-inflammatory disinfectant and keratolytic agents. E.g. Epi-otic.

