

Does your pet have sore, itchy ears?



It could possibly be otitis (inflammation of the ears). There are three stages of otitis.

In stage 1 - the external ear is affected and you may notice that your pet is shaking its head or pawing at its ears. It may also have a discharge, with or without odor.

In stage 2 - the disease spreads to the middle ear, including the ear drum.

In the final stage - otitis spreads to the inner ear, which houses your pet's balance system.

In the more severe stages - pets are reluctant to open their mouths or chew and have a pronounced head tilt and balance problems.

You may be wondering how otitis develops.

Many things cause pet's ears to become inflamed, including ear mites, a bacterial or yeast infection, a foreign object or mass within the ear, allergies, or medical conditions that allow infection to develop within the ear. Some breeds are more likely to develop problems because of their ear structure. It can take time and a variety of diagnostic tests for your veterinarian to determine the underlying cause. But this cause **must be** identified, or the problem can worsen and spread farther into the ear, causing your pet intense pain and possibly require surgery to drain the infected material and remove the affected tissue.

Even if bacterial or yeast infections are not the primary cause, they often develop in affected ears.

Your vet will likely prescribe medications to treat these infections and show you how to administer them.

Clean your pet's ears!

An important part of treating your pet's otitis involves frequent ear cleanings, which you can do at home. Make sure you can clean your pet's ears either outdoors or in an area such as a tiled bathroom where nothing can be stained by debris from the ear canal.

- ✓ To clean, first flood the ear canal or soak a cotton ball with ear cleaning solution prescribed by your vet. Make sure you fill the ear canal- don't just use a few drops.
 - ✓ Gently massage at the base of the ear for at least 20 seconds.
 - ✓ Let your pet shake their head to help remove wax and debris from the ear. Dry the ear canal with a dry cotton ball.
- *****Never** clean your pet's ears with a cotton swab. The swab pushes the debris farther into the ear canal and puts the eardrum under pressure, possibly causing it to rupture. Cleaning varies based on how severely your pet's ears are affected so be sure to read the directions on the label carefully! ***

Call your local vet!

Follow your vet's instructions for cleaning and administering medications. Be sure to bring your pet in for a recheck even after the inflammation has cleared. Otitis often recurs in dogs and cats, and the medications that cleared it up the first time may not work the next time because a different type of infection may have developed. So be sure to see your veterinarian if signs do recur.

