

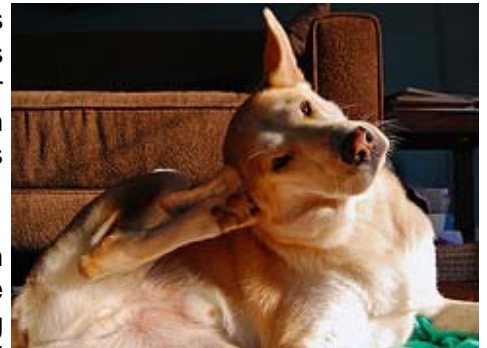
Why Does My Pet Scratch Its Ears?



There are a variety of reasons why a dog or cat will shake his head or scratch at his ears. In order to offer your pet the most effective treatment, a veterinarian will need to do an examination, by looking at your pet's ears with an otoscope. This enables them to look inside the ear canal and make an accurate diagnosis. In addition, they may suggest ear cytology to determine if there is an infection present and how severe.

SYMPTOMS OF EAR INFECTIONS

Your pet will usually tell you when his ears are bothering him by scratching, rubbing his head against the carpet or furniture, or shaking his head. You may also notice an unpleasant odor coming from your pet's ears when an infection is present.



Sometimes the itching and irritation associated with an ear infection will cause the pet to traumatize the ear, producing what's called an aural hematoma. A dog will often vigorously shake his head, causing the rupture of tiny capillaries in the earflap. The ear then fills with blood, taking on a large, swollen appearance.

CAUSES

A small population of *yeast and bacteria* are normal in the ear canal of dogs and cats, but water, foreign bodies, or excessive hair can lead to a bacterial or yeast overgrowth that causes infection.



Ear mites are very small (they cannot be seen with the naked eye) parasites that inhabit the ear canal of both dogs and cats. These mites are picked up from contact with other infested animals. An animal suffering from ear mite infestation will continually scratch at his head and ears. As a result, a bacterial infection may settle in the ears as well.

Fleas around the head area may cause a pet to scratch at the ears.

Allergies are a frequent cause of ear infections. Too much contact with an allergen can lead to excessive wax formation, which yeast and bacteria love to grow on.

UNTREATED EFFECTS

If left untreated, ear infections and parasites can cause long-term damage to your pet's ear.

TREATMENT

Yeast and bacterial infections are often treated with topical ointments to eliminate the infection. Once the infection is gone and the ear canal is clean, routine use of an ear cleanser can help keep the canals clean and dry.

If your pet has itched so hard that he has produced an aural hematoma, we will need to place the pet under anesthesia, lance and drain the fluid, and then suture the incision site. In severe ear mite infestations or ear infections, your veterinarian may want to do an ear flush. By putting the pet under anesthesia, the doctor is able to thoroughly rinse any debris from the entire ear canal. If ear mites or fleas are present, application of Revolution topically on the back will very easily eliminate the problem.

FOLLOW-UP

Your veterinarian may recommend seeing your pet again in a week or so. That's to ensure that the procedure and/or medication have taken care of the problem. Without proper follow-up, an ear problem can linger on, leading to more serious inner ear conditions.

Who's susceptible to ear infections?

Cats who go outside can pick up ear mites and fleas from other infested animals and from the environment.

Dogs with long, floppy ears, like Cocker Spaniels and Basset Hounds. Unlike dogs with erect ears, pendulous ears do not allow air to circulate. Yeast and bacterial infections are common.

Dogs who go swimming a lot, like Labrador and Golden Retrievers, or dogs and cats that are bathed frequently. Water in the ear canal can lead to infections.

Dogs like the Poodle, Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, Bichon Frise, or long-haired cats that have excessive hair in their ears.

Genetic inheritance. Some breeds, like the Shar Pei, are more likely to suffer recurrent infections.

Please do not ever put anything in you pet's ears unless prescribed by a veterinarian.

