

IDENTIFYING EAR PROBLEMS IN PETS

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Infections and other problems of the ear are all too common in pets. If not treated early, these conditions worsen, causing chronic and more serious problems that are far more difficult to treat.

Be aware of the following symptoms of ear disease:

- Odor or discharge from ears
- Scratching or rubbing of ears
- Redness or swelling of the ear flap or canal
- Shaking or tilting of the head to one side
- Pain around the ears
- Changes in behavior such as depression or irritability

Because ear problems can be caused by any of a number of factors, determining the source of the problem is important. While the following guidelines may help you narrow the possibilities, you should see your veterinarian to determine the exact cause and recommended treatment.

- Brown, waxy discharge with a bad odor often indicates a yeast infection.
- Yellowish discharge with a bad odor could indicate a bacterial infection, which should be treated immediately so it does not spread to the middle ear.
- Dry, dark, crumbly debris resembling coffee grounds is a telltale sign of ear mites. Ear cleaning, followed by treatment with an ear mite medicine often eliminates these parasites.
- Itching may be caused by allergies. Regular ear cleaning, antihistamines, and the additional fatty acids in a supplement will help.
- Foreign particles in the ear may cause pain, headshaking, and irritation, and should be removed.

Regardless of the cause of ear disease, however, we must always make sure we keep the ear canal clean by using a product specifically made for that purpose. Regular ear cleaning is also the best way to prevent ear problems.