

# Chronic Ear Disease & Allergic Otitis

*Why do ear infections keep coming back?*

Ear disease is one of the most common problems we see in pets. It's painful, frustrating and rarely goes away on its own.

Our goal: healthy ears, less pain, and a better quality of life.

Healthy ears start with treating the cause, not just the infection.



## 1 WHAT IS OTITIS?

Otitis means inflammation or infection of the ear canal.

- ✓ Can be caused by bacteria, yeast or both
- ✓ Very common and often painful
- ✓ Not just "dirty ears"
- ✓ Recurrent cases usually have an underlying cause



Bad smell is NOT normal. It is usually a sign of infection or inflammation.

## 2 SIGNS OF EAR DISEASE

- (o) Head shaking or tilting
- Scratching at ears
- Redness or swelling
- Discharge
- Bad smell
- Pain when ears are touched
- Rubbing ears on furniture
- Loss of balance (severe cases)



If you notice any of these signs, book a vet check.

## 3 WHY DO EAR INFECTIONS KEEP RETURNING?

Most recurrent ear infections are a symptom of an underlying problem.

- Allergies (most common cause)
- Moisture or swimming
- Narrow ear canals
- Hairy ears / poor air flow
- Skin disease or hormonal issues
- Chronic inflammation
- Improper cleaning or products
- Foreign bodies (e.g. grass seeds)



Treating the infection is only part of the solution. We must find and manage the cause.

## 4 ALLERGIES & THE EARS

Allergies are the #1 reason for recurrent ear disease.

Allergies can cause:

- ✓ Itchy ears
- ✓ Itchy skin & feet
- ✓ Excessive licking
- ✓ Rubbing & scratching
- ✓ Inflammation of skin & ear canals
- ✓ Recurring infections
- ✓ Anal gland issues



Common environmental allergens include:



Pollen

Dust mites

Mould

Grass

Allergies can be food-related or environmental (seasonal or year-round). Long-term management of allergies is the key to long-term ear health.

## 5 EAR CLEANERS

Ear cleaners are available over the counter and are an important part of ear health. Regular cleaning helps remove wax, debris and excess moisture, creating an environment less favourable for infections developing. Types of ear cleaners & their benefits:



**DRYING / ACIDIFYING CLEANERS**

- Help remove moisture
- Discourage yeast & bacteria
- Great for prevention in prone dogs



**CERUMINOLYTIC CLEANERS**

- Help break down wax & debris
- Useful for maintenance
- Improve penetration of medications



**ANTISEPTIC CLEANERS**

- Contain antibacterial / antifungal ingredients
- Useful for mild infections or maintenance



**IMPORTANT WHEN USING EAR CLEANERS:**

- ✗ Use as directed on the label
- ✗ Do not insert anything deep into the ear canal
- ✗ Never use harsh home remedies (vinegar, alcohol, etc.)
- ✗ Over-cleaning can irritate the ear
- ✗ Stop if your pet shows pain or discomfort



Not sure which cleaner is right for your pet? Ask our team which we recommend and how often to use it.

## 6 WHY SOME DOGS NEED SEDATION OR GA

Some dogs are too painful, too fearful or too difficult to manage safely while awake.

Sedation or general anaesthesia may be needed for:

- ✓ Thorough ear examination
- ✓ Deep cleaning & flushing
- ✓ Removal of thick wax, debris or foreign bodies (e.g. grass seeds)
- ✓ Retrieval of foreign bodies (grass seeds, foxtails, etc.)
- ✓ Extremely painful ears
- ✓ Narrow or collapsed ear canals
- ✓ Fearful or aggressive pets



Proper cleaning under sedation or anaesthesia allows us to treat the infection more effectively and provide longer-lasting relief.

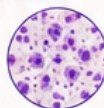


## WHY CYTOLOGY IS IMPORTANT

A simple ear swab (cytology) allows us to see what is causing the infection (yeast, bacteria, mites, etc.) and how severe it is. This helps direct the most appropriate treatment for your pet.

## WHY RECURRENT INFECTIONS NEED PROPER DIAGNOSIS

Different infections require different treatments. Cytology identifies the cause so we can target the problem and get better, longer-lasting results.



## REPEATED ANTIBIOTIC USE WITHOUT VETERINARY ASSESSMENT CAN LEAD TO:

- ✗ Antimicrobial resistance
- ✗ "Super infections"
- ✗ Chronic, difficult-to-treat ears
- ✗ Incorrect or unnecessary medications
- ✗ More severe long-term disease



Regular rechecks and cytology help ensure infections are improving and that medications are still appropriate.

## 7 LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

Ear disease is usually chronic. Our goal is control, not cure.

- ✓ Identify & manage underlying allergies
- ✓ Use medications as prescribed (e.g. Apoquel®, Cytopoint®, steroids, diet trials)
- ✓ Maintain a regular ear cleaning routine
- ✓ Recheck ears to monitor progress
- ✓ Prevent flare-ups & manage triggers
- ✓ Keep up with treatment plans even when ears look good



Consistency is key! Stopping treatment too early is the #1 reason infections come back.

## 8 END-STAGE EAR DISEASE

If chronic inflammation continues, permanent damage can occur.

Changes we may see:

- Thickened, scarred ear canals
- Calcification (bone changes)
- Narrowing or closure of canals
- Chronic pain & discharge
- Hearing loss

When medical management is no longer effective, surgery may be recommended.

TECA-BO (Total Ear Canal Ablation & Bulla Osteotomy)

- Removes the diseased ear canal
- Relieves chronic pain
- High success rate for severe cases
- Allows pets to return to a



## DID YOU KNOW?



Up to 20% of dogs will have an ear infection in their lifetime.



Recurrent ear infections can become more severe and harder to treat over time.



Early treatment and addressing the underlying cause leads to better outcomes and less cost in the long run.



Comfortable pets = happier pets!

## ADDITIONAL TIPS



Use veterinarian recommended products & follow directions



Keep rechecks to monitor progress and prevent relapse



Small changes in environment can reduce irritation



Prompt action at the first sign of ear issues makes a big difference



Every pet is unique. Your vet will create a plan of care that's personalised for your pet based on their needs.

