



Ear Infections

I think what most pet owners and many veterinarians overlook is that an ear infection is quite often secondary to another, primary problem. Most often that primary problem is allergic reaction (usually a food allergy or inhalant allergic reaction) that creates inflammation and additional discharge within the ear canal. That environment is a perfect breeding ground for organisms to grow and create the ear infection.

Many of these organisms (usually bacteria and/or yeast) live in small numbers within the ear canal normally, but under the conditions that the allergic reaction creates, they multiply exponentially.

There are some infections that might develop without the underlying allergic reaction, but I think are much lower in incidence. One infection I hear many people refer to often is ear mites. We do see occasional ear mite infections, but the typical case is a new puppy or kitten, usually from the pet store or shelter. They can transmit to other pets in the family, but usually through immediate contact with each other such as sleeping together.

So treatment of ear infections requires a multi-faceted approach:

1. Identification of the causative agent, whether yeast, bacterial or mites. Sometimes bacterial culture must be done with resistant infections.
2. Cleaning of the discharge that has accumulated within the canal. This would necessitate proper flushing and irrigating of the canal to remove discharge deep within the canal and use of an appropriate cleanser that would liquify the discharge for removal yet not irritate the already inflamed ear canal.
3. Treatment with the appropriate antibiotic or antifungal agent to treat that infection.
4. Treatment or removal of the possible, underlying, allergic reaction. This might involve anti-inflammatory injections, a food trial, or in severe cases, a referral to a veterinary dermatologist for allergy testing and identification of offending allergens.

So I think the first step is to have the ear evaluated by the veterinarian so the appropriate treatments are initiated. Then, ongoing attention to keep the ear clean and prevent discharge from building up that can be a medium for the infections to grow in. If the underlying cause can be identified, the frequency and severity of the ear infections is dramatically reduced.

PLEASE CONSULT OUR CLINIC AT 770-977-9000 IF YOUR PET EXPERIENCES PROBLEMS WITH EAR INFECTIONS.