

EAR HEMATOMA

An **EAR HEMATOMA** is a large collection of blood that forms between the skin and the cartilage in the ear. This appears as a “lump” or swelling of the ear flap. The most common cause of this condition is excessive head shaking as a result of an ear infection. Other possible causes include allergy or trauma, such as a bite wound or hitting the head on a solid object. Hereditary tendencies may also be involved, as some breeds and families within the breed are more prone to this than others. *This condition can RECUR in the same ear or other ear if underlying problems are not corrected.*

A swollen ear flap should be evaluated and treated as quickly as possible to reduce the chance of permanent disfigurement of the ear. If the hematoma is not treated properly, one of two things will happen:

1. The hematoma will continue to enlarge until it ruptures and becomes infected.
2. The blood clot will cause permanent damage to the appearance of the ear. This may result in a very thick ear that can interfere with normal ventilation of the ear canal leading to ear infections. Sometimes as the clot matures and contracts, it will cause the ear to become “cauliflower-like” in appearance. This change is irreversible and results in a “withered-up” appearance to the ear flap.

Once the blood clot has formed, the treatment of choice is surgical drainage. There are several different surgical procedures used to correct this problem. Currently, we prefer a technique that utilizes multiple circular incisions to drain the clot. Although this procedure takes more time to perform, it has a much higher rate of returning the ear to a normal appearance.