

OTITIS

1. Otitis means an inflammation of the ear. It may involve the outer ear, middle ear, or inner ear.

Often more than one part is infected. Ear infections are often very painful for your pet.

2. Causes of ear infections include ear parasites (mites), injuries, bacterial or yeast infections, matted hair in the ear canals, allergy, or foreign objects in the ear canal. Over-the-counter ear cleaners and the use of peroxide to clean the ears by well-meaning owners often causes the infection because the ears cannot properly drain and dry after cleaning.

3. Long, floppy ears are more prone to infection because the area inside the ear canal becomes warm, dark, and moist which is the perfect environment for infections to live. The major problem is that the normal anatomy of the ear does not allow for drainage of ear discharges.

4. Signs of ear infections include scratching at the ears and/or shaking the head. Ears are often very red. A foul, smelly discharge is often present if the infection involves the outer ear.

5. If ear infections are not properly treated, the infection often becomes “chronic” which means it tends to reoccur.

Recurrent infections cause the ear canal tissue to change in appearance becoming thick and rough. This often severely impairs hearing causing your pet to become deaf.

6. The type ear infection must be determined by examination of the ear discharge under the microscope as well as visually inspecting the ear canal and ear drum with an otoscope. Due to the severe inflammation often present, **sedation** is often required to properly examine and treat the ears.

7. Middle ear infections often occur as a result of infections ascending through the Eustachian tube from the throat and tonsils. In many of these cases, the outer ear appears to be perfectly normal. This is because the ear drum prevents the infection from escaping from the middle ear.

8. Treatment varies with the type infection and length of time the infection has been present.

Systemic antibiotics are often required as well as topical medication. Chronic infections may require life-long treatment to keep the infection under control. This is why it is **so important** that you follow directions and treat the ear for a sufficient length of time!