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Otitis Externa (Outer Ear Infection)

General Information

Otitis externa is an inflammation of the external ear canal that begins at the outside opening of the ear and extends inward to the eardrum. Causes include bacteria, fungi, ear mites, accumulation of wax, thick or matted hair in the ear canal, debris, impaired drainage of the ear and infections from elsewhere in the body.

The ears of dogs (especially those with pendulous ears) and cats are ideal for the growth of bacteria and fungi because they are moist and warm and contain wax and other debris. The funnel shape of the ear canal effectively traps debris, further complicating treatment of infections.

Important Points in Treatment

1. General anesthesia is often necessary to allow thorough cleansing of the ear canal and to obtain specimens for bacterial cultures.
2. The longer the infection has been present, the more difficult it is to clear up. In severe long-standing infections, surgery may be necessary to correct the problem.
3. *Medication:* To be effective, the medication must contact microorganisms or mites deep in the ear canal. To achieve this contact, the canal must be kept clear of debris, and the medication must be placed deep within the canal. Please call the doctor if you are having trouble treating your pet's ear.

4. *Cleaning the ear:*

Cleanse the ear _____ time(s) weekly/daily as follows: _____

5. *Treatment schedule:*

_____ Follow the directions on the label.

_____ Other: _____

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- You cannot medicate your pet's ear(s).
- Your pet continually rubs, paws or scratches its ear(s).
- Your pet shows other signs of illness during treatment.
- Your pet's infection recurs after apparent recovery.