



## Bloom Animal Hospital, P.C.

734/425-2270

### Allergy, Skin & Ear Clinic for Pets

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#### OTITIS EXTERNA (disease of the external ear)

Otitis externa or inflammation of the external ear is a very common ailment in dogs. Often there is an infection present. Symptoms may include: an odor or discharge from the ear, scratching or shaking his head or ear, soreness, or swelling of the ear flap. However, some dogs show very few symptoms and it will only be diagnosed by an otoscopic examination.

Otitis has many **INITIATING** causes such as flea allergies, atopic dermatitis, environmental allergens, food allergy, ear mites, or anatomical abnormalities (eg-scar tissue from previous ear infections or polyps/tumors in the ears)

Yeast or bacterial (cocci or rods) infection will complicate otitis externa, however, these germs don't start an ear problem.

In order to diagnose and treat an ear problem, we do the following:

1. A complete history is taken to help identify an initiating cause.
2. A complete dermatological exam is done, since frequently the ear is part of an overall skin problem.
3. A thorough otoscopic exam is done. It is important that the ear canal is evaluated for swelling, discharge or ulcers. The ear drum also needs to be visualized to determine if a middle ear infection exists.
4. A cytological exam (cell examination) is done to identify what kind, if any, of organisms (yeast or bacteria) are present. This is very important because certain bacteria (rods) are hard to treat and need long term therapy. Also, ear mites can be identified from this test.
5. An ear flush may be done to completely clear the ear canal and make certain the eardrum is intact.
6. We have the most advanced equipment for diagnosing and treating ear disease, including a **video-otoscope**. We use this "high tech" equipment to visualize the entire ear canal, ear drum, and occasionally the middle ear on a TV monitor. Through this video-otoscope, we collect samples from the ear canal and apply medications. We can also take pictures of the ear canal and ear drum which assists in monitoring response to therapy.
7. A bacterial culture and sensitivity is performed if the infection is chronic or the eardrum is ruptured.

After the cause of the otitis has been determined, appropriate medication is prescribed. It is essential to do a follow-up exam in 7 days. Although the symptoms may disappear during the treatment, the problem (disease) may persist. Most infections need medication for 7-14 days once the infection is resolved. An otoscopic examination is the only way to be sure the ear problem is gone. If the otitis recurs or becomes chronic, further testing or procedures may be needed. (allergy testing, elimination diets, etc)

If the eardrum is ruptured, the middle ear will need to be flushed out and skull radiographs will be performed. These procedures are done under general anesthesia.

Even though there are many causes of otitis, most cases respond quickly to treatment especially if the initiating cause is addressed. The sooner the pet with otitis is seen, the easier (and less costly) the treatment may be.

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