



## Stacey Chappell, DVM

Dr. Stacey Chappell is a seasoned veterinarian with over 20 years' experience with small animals. He spent most of his earlier career as the owner and medical director of a veterinary emergency hospital, gaining vast experience in diagnosing, treating critical care patients and performing advanced surgical procedures.

After taking over Animal Medical Centre of Greensboro, PA, in August 2014, Dr. Chappell now enjoys forming lasting relationships with his clients and patients based on lifetime preventive care.

## SO HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR PET HAS A PROBLEM?

Most of the time it is "painfully obvious" such as:

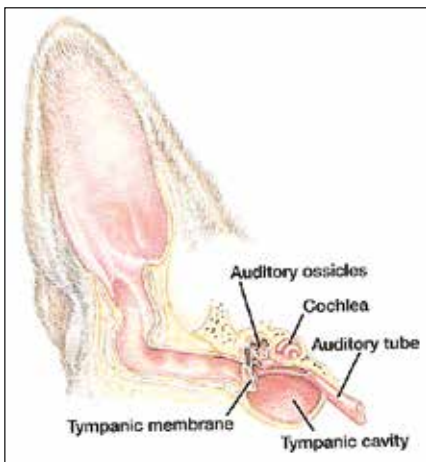
- Shaking or tilting of the head
- Crying out and pawing at the ear (or neck and cheek area)
- Odor and/or discharge from the ear(s)
- Redness (inflammation) of the ear flap and the canal

## Doggy Ear Health: What's Going on in There?

What do the head shaking and scratching really mean?

Your dog is shaking his head and scratching at his messy, smelly ears.....AGAIN!!! Do you wonder what to do? Well, don't feel bad, you aren't alone! Ear problems are consistently the number one reason people seek veterinary care for their pets. VPI (Veterinary Pet Insurance) reports more than 60,000 claims per year for ear problems. Second on their list is skin allergy and third is skin infection. Most of these could likely be lumped together under "atopy" (classic allergies, specifically dermatitis). I want to make sure we make clear the association between the two.

I would like to share some information that will hopefully help you better understand your dog's ear and the some of the problems they commonly encounter.



Dog's ears make a sharp turn upward and open from the "vertical canal" (see diagram). This makes for less air flow, more trapped moisture and debris and a much more difficult path for goop working its way out of the canal.

First, let's look at the anatomy. Our ears open straight out from the eardrum (a horizontal canal). Our dog's ears make a sharp turn upward and open from the "vertical canal" (see diagram). This makes for less air flow, more trapped moisture and debris, and a much more difficult path for goop working its way out of the canal.

The "tympanic membrane" is the ear drum. Infection from here to the outside is called "otitis externa". Infection deeper within the ear is called "otitis media" (middle ear) and "otitis interna" (inner ear). For the most part we are discussing external ear infection, but the others can be an extension of external ear infection if left untreated.

## NOW LET'S CHARACTERIZE THE TYPE OF PROBLEM:

- Acute (sudden/first time) or chronic (recurrent or persistent)
- Cause: infectious, inflammatory (allergic), parasitic or sometimes foreign object/tumor/polyp
- Underlying factors: mainly allergies, thyroid disease

## HOW DO WE PROCEED? DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT:

Your veterinarian will thoroughly examine your pet, not just the affected ear and obtain a history, especially about previous ear problems. Typically a cotton swab is introduced into the ear to help characterize the type of debris present and assess how painful your pet's condition is. SEDATION IS COMMONLY NEEDED TO COMPLETELY AND, AS PAINLESSLY AS POSSIBLE, OBTAIN SAMPLES FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS AND TO CLEAN AND APPLY INITIAL MEDICATION TO THE EARS!

- The cornerstone of ear treatment is complete cleaning of the ear followed by application of a medication that typically includes an anti-fungal (to manage yeast that is so prevalent), an antibiotic to manage bacteria that is commonly associated (either Staph species as an opportunistic infection or Pseudomonas species....and others that can be primary causes of ear infection).
- If this is a recurrent problem it is best to obtain cultures to make sure we know exactly which organism is present and that we have an appropriate medication to effectively eliminate the infection, AND CONSIDER OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

**Conclusion:** Ear infections in dogs are exceedingly common and most often involve infection with a bacteria and/or yeast. Ear problems that are recurrent should be evaluated for underlying causes, mainly allergies (atopy). ALLERGIC DOGS MANIFEST WITH EAR INFECTIONS, REPEATEDLY!! If the allergies aren't addressed, it leads to frustration for everyone involved.

## Animal Medical Centre of Greensboro, PA

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