

## Ear Mites – A Blue House Guide



Most people have heard of ear mites and may assume that if a dog or cat has sore ears then they have caught them. Ear mite infestation usually produces a dry black ear discharge and your pet may shake its head or be painful around the ears. Unfortunately there are lots of causes of sore, itchy, red or waxy ears, and finding out the cause is important in effective treatment. A yeast or bacterial infection will need different treatment to an ear mite infestation.

Ear mites are a fairly common parasite of dogs and cats. They are tiny creatures resembling a microscopic tick. The mite can just barely be seen as a small white dot with the naked eye but usually must be detected by examination of a sample of ear wax under a microscope.



### The Ear Mite Life Cycle

The mite lives on the surface of the ear canal skin, although it sometimes migrates out onto the face and head of its host. Eggs are laid and after 4 days of incubation they hatch. The larva hatches from the egg, feeds on ear wax and skin oils for about a week, and then moults into a nymph, which mates with the adult male.

The adult mite lives for approximately two months, happily eating ear wax and skin oils. The life cycle (the time it takes for an egg to develop into an adult mite ready for parenthood) requires three weeks.

Most ear mite cases are found in cats. Dogs can be infected as well but, since dogs more commonly get ear infections of other types, ear infections in dogs rarely involve mites.



### How did my pet get Ear Mites?

Ear mites readily transmit from host to host by physical contact. Ear mites came from some other animal with which your pet has been socializing. Because mites are easily transmissible by physical contact, treatment for mites often must include all household pets.

### What harm comes from Ear Mite Infection?

Ear mites are inflammatory and they can generate very irritating ear infections. Skin disease can also result from infection by the ear mite. Repeated shaking of the head may lead to an aural haematoma – a large blood filled swelling on the ear which may need surgery to treat.



An Aural Haematoma

## Is this Contagious to Me?

Ear mite infection is certainly contagious among cats and dogs. Humans have been reported to develop skin rashes rarely; in general, we may consider that a pet owner is extremely unlikely to experience symptoms when their pet is infected with ear mites.

## How do I Get Rid of Ear Mites?

One of the common treatments we may use is an ear drop called **Canaural**. Treatment is usually for 21 days to treat the whole life cycle (but may include a week's rest in the middle), and your pet may need the ear cleaning out too.



There are some licensed prescription “spot-on” products to treat ear mites (as well as prevent fleas and intestinal worms); **Stronghold** and **Advocate**. With either product, a single application is used on the skin at the back of the neck; the product is absorbed into the body where it kills numerous other parasites and then returns to the skin to be concentrated. When these products are used as regular flea control, they have the added benefit of on-going ear mite prevention. Stronghold is primarily a flea control product but is approved for both dogs and cats for the treatment of ear mite infection. Advocate only has approval against ear mites in cats. Both products are available by prescription only.



In some cases a final ear cleaning is needed a month or so after the product has been applied, to remove any dried or old ear wax still left in the ear.

## What if they just “don’t seem to ever go away”?

Occasionally, we hear from clients with a case of ear mites for which “everything” has been used and the mites simply will not go away. In this situation consider the following tips:

1. Is it definitely ear mites? Remember, it is easy to be fooled by a discharge that appears “mite typical.” This might not be an ear mite infection at all, or perhaps it was in the beginning but is now a bacterial or fungal infection.
2. Has the continuing mite infection been confirmed after therapy? Sometimes, a tell-tale hard bit of ear wax must be removed from the ear before comfort is finally achieved. Sometimes a bacterial infection remains even though the mites are long gone. Treating for ear mites when none are present will not achieve results.
3. Were all the animals in the family treated? If all pets were not treated, begin again, this time including all pets in the family. If all pets are not treated, they will simply re-infect each other.
4. Consider using one of the prescription spot-on products. If you are trying to use one of the daily ear drops, a day’s treatment is easily missed by mistake.

**If you have any concerns about your pet’s ears please call us on 01782 522100.**