

# Ear infection

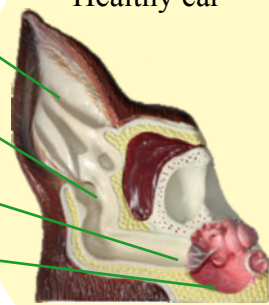
Infection of the ear canal is a common problem in dogs and cats. Not only is it painful, but it can spread to the deeper parts of the ear, causing problems with balance and hearing, and damage to nerves and other structures surrounding the ear. Once established, ear infections can cause permanent damage, and can prove difficult if not impossible to clear.

Ear flap (pinna) Healthy ear

Ear canal

Ear drum

Middle ear

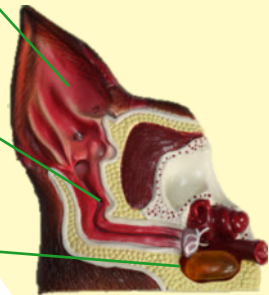


Ear flap becomes red, flakey, and hot to the touch

Ear canal becomes narrow due to thickening and folding of ear canal lining

Ear drum perforation results in spread of infection to the middle ear

Infected ear



## Signs of ear infection

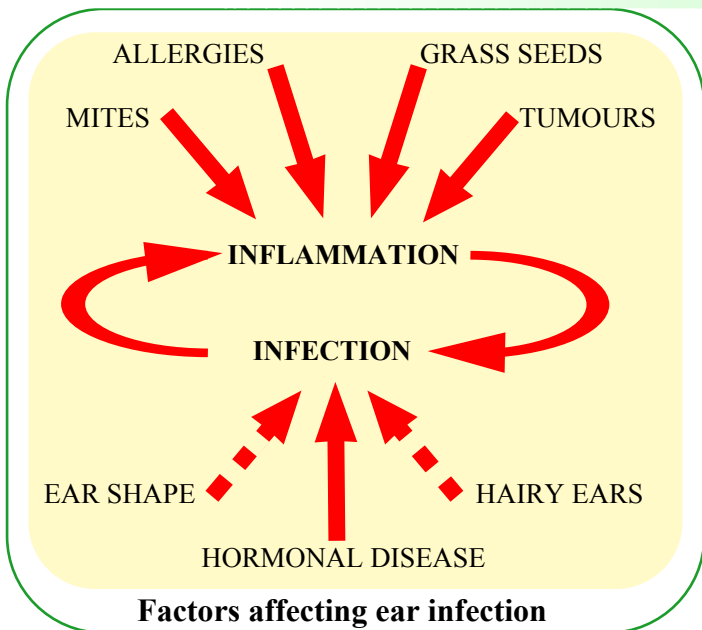
- Unpleasant smell from the ear
- Scratching or rubbing the ear
- Holding the head to one side
- Shaking the head
- Black or yellow discharge
- Loss of balance or hearing
- Redness, heat or scaling of pinna
- Pain on touching the ear

## Causes of ear infection

- Skin allergies
- Ear mites
- Hormonal diseases
- Foreign bodies (grass seeds)
- Tumours and polyps

Infection is more likely in dogs with pendulous (floppy) ear flaps, or with hairy or narrow ear canals, however these factors will not cause ear infection on their own

Whatever the initial cause of an ear infection, the inflammation it causes sets up a vicious cycle of wax production, and ear canal thickening, that causes the infection to persist. Breaking this cycle is essential in getting the infection under control.



- ### Treatment of ear infection
- Ear drops containing antibiotics are usually used in the treatment of ear infection.
  - The antibiotic used may be based on analysis of swabs taken from ears.
  - In severe infections, antibiotic tablets may also be necessary.
  - Ear washes are commonly used to remove wax and debris from the ear. In long-standing infections, the ears may be syringed under anaesthesia.
  - Sometimes, if repeated courses of treatment are unsuccessful in clearing infection, surgery may be the only way of solving the problem.

- ### How to administer ear drops to your pet
- Make sure your pet is firmly but comfortably restrained. You may need help to do this.
  - Lift the ear flap and hold it over the top of the head.
  - Gently place the nozzle of the bottle into the lowest opening of the ear, aiming downwards and a bit forwards.
  - Squeeze the bottle to empty some contents into the ear canal.
  - Massage the ear canal below the ear flap to distribute the liquid within the ear canal. You should hear a sloshing sound as you do this.



**Because ear infections may be associated with life long skin conditions, long term treatment is often necessary to control infection and prevent recurrence. This can include regular cleaning with antiseptic washes, and removal of hairs growing in the ears. Investigation and treatment of the**

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