



Dr. Jason Herrmann

3501 East Conner Street
Noblesville, IN 46060

Phone: 317-313-8760
Fax: 317-219-0361
www.mobilevetcare.com

Ear Infections

Ear infections are caused by bacteria and yeast that overgrow in the ear canal. The bacteria and yeast come from either the skin of the animal or the environment. The immune system normally prevents these bacteria and yeast from overgrowing, but certain situations can occur that allow the invasion of the infecting organisms.

First, let us discuss the difference between a primary ear infection and a secondary ear infection. A primary ear infection means that the infecting organism was able to overgrow in an otherwise normal ear. This usually occurs after swimming, for example. When the ear gets wet during the swim and does not dry out properly, bacteria or yeast get a chance to thrive in the moist, warm, and dark ear canal. A primary ear infection is usually easy to treat because the immune system can easily 'catch up' to the infection with a little help from antibiotics or anti-yeast agents.

A secondary ear infection means that something is inherently wrong with the ear canal allowing the infecting agent to thrive. Usually the underlying problem is an allergy. Dogs and cats with allergies do not exhibit the same symptoms as people do. People sneeze, rub their eyes, have runny noses, and feel tired with allergies. Dogs and cats instead get itchy skin, itchy feet, and very commonly get inflamed ear canals. The inflamed ear canals cannot fight off infection like a normal ear canal. The bacteria and yeast then infect the ear "secondary" to the ear inflammation. If the ear inflammation was not there the infection could not have occurred. Treatment now has to consist of treating the ear infection, and also treating the underlying problem.

Common ear treatments:

Ear rinse: breaks up wax, dries the ear canal, reduces the pH to inhibit growth of bacteria and yeast

Ointments: have antibiotics +/- anti yeast agents. Sometimes they have also have anti-inflammatory medications.

Drops: can have antibiotics, anti-yeast, anti-inflammatory or any combination

Often multiple treatments are used at the same time. Systemic medications may also be used in severe cases, or in secondary ear infections that need the systemic allergy controlled as well.

Chronic ear infections take persistence to maintain control, but a happier pet is very attainable with some patience and communication between you and your veterinarian.