

Ear Infections

Dermatology Service



Michigan Veterinary Specialistssm

www.michvet.com

We Can Help

Available Services

- 24/7 Emergency & Critical Care
- Cardiology
- Computed Tomography
- Dermatology & Allergy
- Internal Medicine
- Interventional Radiology
- MRI
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Oncology
- Oncologic Surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Radiology & Fluoroscopy
- Radiation Therapy
- Soft Tissue Surgery
- Ultrasound

Locations

Auburn Hills

3412 E. Walton Blvd.
(West of Squirrel Rd.)
(248) 371-3713

Grand Rapids

1425 Michigan St. NE
(East of Fuller Rd.)
(616) 284-5300

Southfield

29080 Inkster Rd.
(North of 12 Mile Rd.)
(248) 354-6660

Warning Signs

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 of the head or ears; soreness; and/or swelling of the ear flap.

However, some dogs show very few symptoms and it will only be diagnosed by an otoscopic examination.



What causes ear infections?

Otitis has many **INITIATING** causes such as flea allergies, atopic dermatitis (an allergic reaction that occurs when an animal inhales airborne substances (pollen, housedust) or ingest (eats) a substance to which they are sensitive), ear mites, foreign bodies, hormone imbalances (thyroid, adrenal, sex hormones), anatomical abnormalities (scar tissue from previous ear infections, excessive hair in the ears, floppy pendulous ears or polyps/tumors in the ears) and water getting in the ears (swimming, bathing).

Yeast or bacteria (cocci or rods) infection will complicate otitis externa, however, these germs do not start an ear problem.

Diagnosis

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 examination is done, since frequently the ear is part of an overall skin problem.
3. A thorough otoscopic examination is done. It is important that the ear canal is evaluated for swelling, discharge and/or ulcers. The eardrum 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. A deep ear flush under general anesthesia 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, eardrum, 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 eardrum which assists in monitoring response to therapy.

A bacterial culture and susceptibility is performed if the infection is chronic or the eardrum is ruptured.

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Ear Infections continued...

Treatment

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 at least 7-14 days after the infection has 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 using the video-otoscope and skull radiographs +/- CT scan will be performed. These procedures are done under general anesthesia.

Even though there are many underlying 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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