



Chronic ear issues in dogs can be frustrating and persistent, especially with some dogs being prone to relapse. In addition to being some of the most common reasons for veterinary visits, chronic ear problems are likewise challenging for pet owners to manage at home, particularly if regular manipulation of uncomfortable ears results in the pet objecting to handling. Pet owners are continuously searching for methods to control their pets' chronic ear flare-ups. Terms related to canine ear infection are searched an average of 33,000 times a month.



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4 Essential Cases for **Proactive Ear Maintenance**



Although there is no single product or protocol that is always effective for every dog, there are certain dogs that veterinarians have identified that frequently require additional attention:

1. The Long-Eared Dog



Floppy ears, although popular among pet owners, predispose dogs to ear problems. The anatomy of these ears create a less-than-ideal environment by decreasing ventilation and increasing humidity. Commonly affected breeds include the basset hound, spaniel breeds, the beagle, the dachshund, and the Labrador retriever.

The ear canals of some breeds such as the pug, bulldog, and Chinese shar-pei can also pose problems. Narrow ear canals not only limit the normal exposure to air but also trap secretions. In addition to creating conditions favorable for secondary problems, restricted ear canals also impede topical medication administration and absorption. Although not a predisposing factor in every case, growth and impaction of hair within the ear canal can also play a role by trapping wax and debris.

2. The Swimming Dog



Although swimming dogs are certainly at an increased risk, moisture from multiple sources, including humidity,¹ excessive cleaning, bathing, grooming, and other animals licking or cleaning the ears, can predispose dogs to problems stemmed from damp ear environments or improper ear pH.

Excessive moisture results in the loss of the protective lipid barrier within the ear canal, facilitating microbial colonization. Once the protective layer lining the external ear canal has been damaged, the normal resident microflora of

the ear canal can be impacted. Frequent moisture on the ear canal can also stimulate excessive wax production. Although preventing or limiting exposure to activities involving excessive moisture is ideal, doing so may not always be practical.

3. The Allergic Dog



As the external ear canals are a continuation of the skin, many dermatologic conditions—including skin problems such as rashes and sores—can manifest within the ear as well as on other areas of the body. In a small percentage of dogs, ear issues may be their only clinical sign recognized by the veterinarian.²

Allergy problems can be controlled and preventive ear care can help avoid or decrease the severity of flare-ups. Dogs with recurring issues in the face of appropriate management may require reassessment of possible underlying skin disease assessed by the veterinarian.

4. The Dog With Repeated Flare-Ups



Dogs with a history of ear issues often show chronic changes to the ear canal, even after all active, perpetuating causes have been addressed. These changes may include hyperkeratosis, dermal edema, and epidermal hyperplasia, which ultimately lead to constriction of the ear canal.

Proactive ear management strategies (cleaning, monitoring, recheck evaluations) may help break the cycle of inflammation and resultant changes, which is especially helpful if instituted early in a dog's life, before more serious chronic changes develop. Proactive care may supplement the ear's impaired natural defenses after chronic changes have developed.

What To Do

If caring for a dog described previously with the possibility of lifelong ear issues, pet owners can take proactive action to decrease the number of chronic changes that accelerate problems faster and further. By quickly recognizing and addressing these four classic cases, pet owners have the chance to significantly improve a dog's everyday comfort. Talk to your veterinarian today to learn more about how to proactively maintain ear health in your dog.



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References: 1. Hayes HM, Pickle LW and Wilson GP. Effect of ear type and weather on prevalence of canine otitis externa. Res Vet Sci. 1987;42:294-298
2. Griffen CE, DeBoer DJ. The ACVD task force on canine atopic dermatitis (XIV): clinical manifestations of canine atopic dermatitis. Vet Immunol. 2001;81:255-69.
*Data on file.