

## TIPS FOR BATTLING CHRONIC EAR DISEASE

There are several causes of ear inflammation and the success of therapy depends on the identification and control of these underlying causes. When considering ear inflammation three things must be considered: Predisposing causes, primary causes, and perpetuating causes.

Predisposing causes are those that increase the risk of development of otitis (ear inflammation), such as narrow ear canals, excess hair in the canals, floppy ears, and an increased number of apocrine glands. Chronically wet ears, topical irritants, obstruction of the ear canal from swelling, inflammatory polyps, and abnormal tissue growth may also contribute to otitis.

Primary causes are those that cause otitis initially usually due to inflammation of the canals. Examples of primary causes include parasites such as various mites. Allergic disease is the most common primary cause of recurrent ear inflammation. Food allergy and intolerance as well as contact allergic reaction may all lead to this condition.

Perpetuating causes are the agents that keep the inflammation ongoing, such as bacteria and yeast. In low numbers, bacteria and yeast are part of the normal flora of the ear. With inflammation of the ear canal, bacteria and yeast will proliferate and contribute to the continuation of the otitis.

The external ear canal should be thoroughly cleaned by the veterinarian as pus and debris will inactivate some medications and may prevent medications from reaching the surface of the canals. Cleaning also removes this exudate that may perpetuate inflammation.

Clients should clean affected ears regularly at home using cotton balls, not cotton swabs. Frequency of cleaning depends on the severity of the otitis, with severe cases requiring once daily, moderate cases requiring two to three times weekly, and mild cases requiring once weekly cleaning.

Topical medications that tend to be effective in the treatment of yeast include miconazole, nystatin, and clotrimazole. For bacteria, gentamicin, polymixin B, enrofloxacin, mupirocin, and others are typically used. Topical anti-inflammatory therapy in the form of steroids is often beneficial in this treatment for its anti-itch, ability to reduce the inflammation, ability to decrease wax production, decrease scar formation, along with other forms of treatment.

Example products that can be used in treating these conditions are Animax, Mometamax, Otomax, Panolog, and Tresaderm.

This article is an excerpt from *Tips For Battling Chronic Ear Disease*, Sarah Colombini, DVM, Diplomate ACVD, The 2004 North American Veterinary Conference and The 2004 Western Veterinary Conference, by John Spunaugle RPh Valley Vet Supply/Direct Pet Superstore.