

EAR CLEANING

Ear cleaning is a common procedure in the small animal practice. The external ear canal can become blocked with cerumen, exudate or cellular debris leading to otitis externa (inflammation of the external ear) or a foreign body, such as a foxtail, which can cause serious trauma.

If you suspect your dog or cat is having ear problems, the initial and essential first step is to bring your pet to your veterinarian for an examination. The veterinarian will determine what the cause of the problem is and recommend a treatment.

The initial and essential step in the treatment of any external ear problem is thorough cleaning. Most often the cleaning can be done fairly simply, but occasionally a short acting anesthetic may be necessary. This depends on the severity of problem and the temperament of the animal.

The first step is to remove any excess hair. The next step is to instill a liberal amount of ear cleaner/disinfectant solution, such as AloCetic Ear Rinse, Oti-Clens or Epi-Otic, into the ear canal and massage thoroughly. After lavage, excessive wax and debris can then be removed by using a soft rubber bulb syringe. Cotton balls and cotton applicator sticks may also be used to gently wipe the wax from the external ear canal. It is important to be extremely careful when cleaning the horizontal ear canal (the canal leading to the tympanic membrane or ear drum) as to not damage the tympanic membrane.

After the cleaning is complete, the ear is rechecked with an otoscope to evaluate the completeness of the ear cleaning and to make sure there are no foreign bodies. Finally, the ear should be dried as thoroughly as possible with clean cotton balls or gauze pads and the initial dose or prescribed otic preparation instilled.

It may be necessary for the pet owner to continue cleaning the ears at home. Instill the prescribed cleaning solution into the ear canal per the veterinarian's directions, massage thoroughly and remove excess debris with clean cotton balls. Do not enter the ear canal with cotton applicator sticks. Dry the ear with some more clean cotton balls and instill the prescribed otic preparation, if any. Be sure to completely follow the veterinarian's directions.

Veterinary ear cleaners are available through your veterinarian. Always check with your veterinarian before using any product.