

Helpful Tips on Ear Cleaning

Many pet owners don't clean their pet's ears on a regular basis, leading to an unhappy dog or cat with ear infections, discomfort and even hearing loss.

Some pet owners simply don't understand the importance of weekly ear cleanings for a dog or cat, while other pet owners procrastinate when their pet struggles and resists ear cleaning efforts. And still, others try to clean their pet's ears on a regular basis, but they aren't cleaning the ears properly, therefore missing out on the benefits of regular ear cleanings.

What Happens if You Don't Clean Your Pet's Ears?

Like humans, animals' ears produce a waxy substance that accumulates in the ear canals. This ear wax will build-up over time, harboring bacteria and inhibiting air flow. This creates an ideal environment for bacterial growth and fungal growth, ultimately causing bacterial ear infections and fungal ear infections, like yeast infections. Parasites, such as ear mites, can also inhabit an animal's ears and cause infection.

Dogs with floppy ears are particularly prone to chronic ear infections since their floppy ears create a warm, dark, moist environment with poor air flow - the perfect place for bacteria to grow and multiply, ultimately leading to a dog with an ear infection.

If a pet develops an ear infection that is not treated, the infection will move toward the inner ear causing permanent hearing damage. Dogs or cats with severe inner ear infections can also develop serious health problems like vestibular syndrome, a condition affecting their balance center in the inner ear, with symptoms like stumbling, lack of balance and vomiting - very similar to vertigo in humans.

How Do You Clean Your Pet's Ears? How Often?

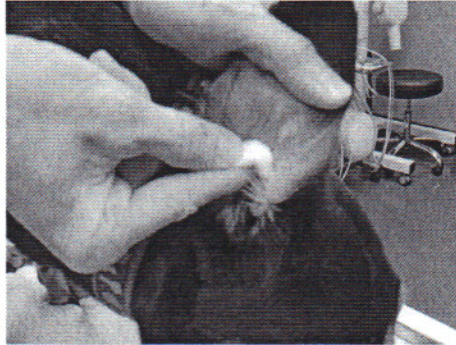
A pet's ears must be cleaned at least once a week. Twice-a-week cleanings are ideal for dogs with floppy ears, since these dogs are more prone to ear infections.

Follow these steps to clean your pet's ears effectively, while minimizing discomfort and struggling.

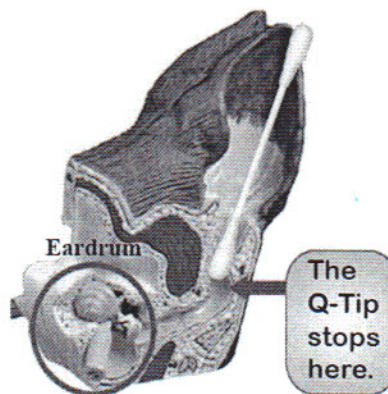
1. Begin by setting out the materials that will be needed to clean the dog's ears: ear cleaner prescribed by a veterinarian (avoid over-the-counter products or solutions like peroxide and alcohol, as these will only cause irritation and improper drying), cotton balls or cotton pads, Q-tips and treats.
2. Place the bottle of ear cleaner in a bowl of hot water. Shake the bottle occasionally and replace the water with new hot water as it cools. Let the bottle sit in the hot water for five

to seven minutes. This will warm the ear cleaning solution, making the process more comfortable for the pet. Many pets who resist and struggle during ear cleanings object to the sensation of the cold cleaning solution in their ears.

3. Sit your dog between your legs or have someone else help hold so your dog can't back up or move around too much. For cats, the same idea applies, although sometimes being wrapped in a towel helps.
4. Dampen a large cotton ball or cotton pad with the ear cleaning solution and wipe the ear. Repeat as needed and then move on to the next ear. This part of the ear cleaning process will remove a significant portion of the ear wax from the ear.



5. Next, dampen both ends of several Q-tips with the warm ear cleaning solution. Use the Q-tips to remove the ear wax from the nooks and crannies of your pet's ears and from the outer portion of the ear canal. Contrary to popular belief, Q-tips are safe! A dog or cat's ear has an L-shaped canal, with the eardrum located at the end of a 90 degree angle. There is no way to physically harm your pet while cleaning their ears.



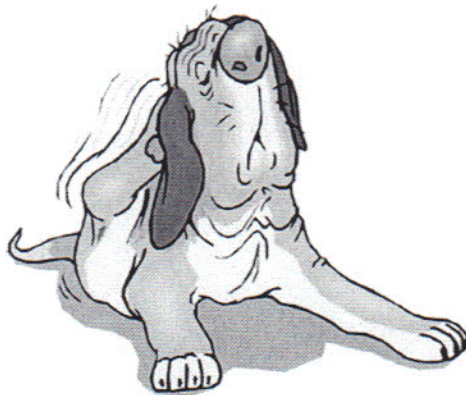
6. When finished, dry both ears well with a dry cotton ball. Do not leave ears wet.
7. During the ear cleaning process, offer praise and treats and keep the tone upbeat and happy. This will help to ease some of your pet's fears concerning ear cleaning.

It is a good idea to clean your pet's ears, especially dogs, after a bath or swimming. Leaving them wet can start infections due to the moistness of the ear canal.

In addition, some pets have fur inside their ear canal. This will make ear cleaning more difficult and it also makes the ear more prone to bacterial growth. Remove the hair from the ears by plucking the hairs (it's not painful when small chunks of hair are plucked at once) or trim the ear hairs. Your groomer can also help with this task.

Regular ear cleaning is best started at a young age. But even older pets can be introduced to a regular ear cleaning schedule when the owner goes about the ear cleaning process in a gentle and encouraging manner.

Owners should always be on the look-out for signs of a pet with an ear infection. Symptoms of a pet with an ear infection include redness, swelling, pain, head shaking, frequent ear scratching, thick ear discharge and ear odor.



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Remember, routine cleaning and observation are the keys to avoiding ear infections. Please call us with any concerns!