

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF EAR AND SKIN CONDITIONS

Recurrent ear and skin infections are often a sign of other underlying conditions such as allergies, parasites or hormonal disorders. If these issues are properly controlled, your pet is less likely to develop skin or ear problems again.

Your vet might suggest looking for the factors that may be causing these problems.

If allergy is suspected as an underlying cause (as it is quite common), a diet trial may be recommended, to exclude an adverse food reaction. Further tests may then also be required to exclude environmental factors such as pollen or dust mites that can cause allergies.

Sometimes, a hypoallergenic diet, with high levels of essential fatty acids and increased vitamins and minerals, may be suggested to support the skin and as an aid to managing the condition.



POST-INFECTION CHECKS

Ear and skin infections should be followed up with post-infection check-ups to make sure the condition has responded to therapy.

Even if the ears and skin seem normal, cytology may be repeated to make sure that the infection has gone and to choose the right regime for long-term management of the condition in your pet's individual case.

Since most recurrent ear and skin infections have an underlying cause, it's important to minimise the chance of it returning by regular ear cleaning in the case of ear infections, and regular shampooing in the case of some skin conditions. Where appropriate, giving your pet a special diet may also be important.

This will reduce long-term antibiotic use, which in turn reduces the risk of resistance, benefiting pets and people all over the world.

Always follow your vet's advice.

WHY ANTIBIOTICS AREN'T ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Understanding treatment for ear and skin disease



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TIME TO CHANGE

UNDERSTANDING MY PET'S TREATMENT

- EAR & SKIN DISEASE

Since the first antibiotics were discovered 70 years ago, these powerful pharmaceuticals have been used to fight bacterial infections in humans and animals all over the world.

Over time, certain bacteria have developed resistance to antibiotics and, although this is a natural phenomenon, it has resulted in some treatments becoming less effective. In fact some infections can't always be easily dealt with. You may have heard of MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) that has been causing an infection problem in some hospitals.

MRSA can be found on animals as well as humans and now dogs have their own resistant bacterium – MRSP (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*) – which can occur on the skin.

AVOIDING RESISTANCE

It's important to avoid making the resistance problem any worse, so an increasing number of vets have a policy of using antibiotics only when necessary.

In the case of ear and skin problems, this means that your pet's skin cells may be studied under a microscope (a process known as cytology), before choosing an appropriate treatment. Your vet may also carry out a culture and sensitivity test to identify the bacteria and see which antibiotic would treat them best.

These investigations may result in vets prescribing a topical antibiotic (one used on the surface of the skin and not injected). When an antibiotic is used topically, it reaches high concentrations at the site of infection and resistance development is less likely. Alternatively, an antibiotic may not be prescribed at all and your vet may recommend using an ear cleaner or medicated veterinary shampoo.

MANAGING EAR PROBLEMS

After clinical examination and cytology, your vet will decide on the most appropriate treatment, which may involve medication, ear cleaning and changing your pet's diet or a combination of all of these.

Ear cleaning is important because, in a diseased ear, the natural self-cleaning process is disturbed. Sometimes, ear cleaning by itself will be enough to control your pet's problems and regular ear cleaning can prevent recurrence of infections in some cases. Often, an ear cleaner is prescribed along with ear drops containing antibiotics, because the medication works better in clean ears.

Ear cleaning should continue for some time after the infection has cleared up. The dose of drops and length of time for which these are continued are also very important and you should follow your vet's advice.



MANAGING SKIN INFECTIONS

Skin problems are very common in cats and dogs and typically cause licking, scratching or thinning of the coat. Finding the cause and choosing the right treatment is very important to help your pet effectively.

Healthy skin has a self-defence barrier and just a few bacteria and yeast on it. Allergies, parasites, hormone disorders, etc. disturb this barrier and may cause itching and irritation. Overgrowth of bacteria and yeast will then cause skin infection, more itch, hair loss and red, sore skin.

After clinical examination and cytology, your vet will decide on the most appropriate treatment, which may involve medicated veterinary shampoo, gels or creams, skin care products such as antiseptic shampoos and conditioners or changing your pet's diet, or a combination of all of these.

Shampooing helps to remove bacteria, debris and crusts from the skin's surface and can soothe skin to help break the itch-scratch cycle, aiding damaged skin repair and restoring coat condition.

If a medicated veterinary shampoo is prescribed the way the shampoo is applied, the number of applications and length of time for which these are continued are very important and so you should follow your vet's advice.

