WHY ANTIBIOTICS AREN’T ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Understanding treatment for ear and skin disease

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.
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 infections becoming less effective. In fact, some bacteria have become resistant to all antibiotics known to man.

The most well-known example of this is MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) which has been causing an infection problem in some hospitals. Overgrowth of bacteria and yeast leading to itching and irritation, overflow ear infections, more itch, hair loss and red, sore skin.

Aviation of 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 an culture and sensitivity test to identify the bacteria and see which antibiotic would treat best.

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.

Avoiding Resistance
Each year, many more dogs develop ear infections because they are allergic to grass, dust and certain foods. This means that regular 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.

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 very important and you should follow your vet’s advice.

Managing Ear Problems
After clinical examination and cytology, your vet will decide on the most appropriate treatment, which may involve medicating, ear cleaning and changing your pet’s diet or a combination of all three.

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-defense barrier and just a few bacteria are usually present. Allergies, parasites, hormone disorders, etc. disrupt this barrier and may cause itching and irritation. Overgrowth of bacteria and yeast then cause skin infection, more itch, hair loss and red, sore skin.

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