



1333 Plaza Blvd, Suite E, Central Point, OR 97502 * www.mountainviewvet.net

CHRONIC EARS

Robert J. Landon, DVM – 3/18/11

By far, the most common dermatological condition I treat on a daily basis is not the skin, it is the ears. Reoccurring ear infections in dogs are very common. Many people tell me they think their dog has ear mites. It turns out, ear mites in dogs is not a common problem. But bacterial and yeast infections in dogs ears is common. If the problem is reoccurring, it usually means there is some underlying problem that is not being addressed. The most common underlying problems are anatomical, allergic, and resistant bug problems.

Anatomical problems usually relate to a narrowed ear canal that prevents ventilation and effective cleaning. Moisture, wax, and dirt accumulate in the canal and create an environment that favors infection. Sometimes an anti-inflammatory can be effective at opening up the canal to improve ventilation. Other times the canals are so narrowed that only surgical removal of the narrowed canal will permit us to effectively treat the remaining infection.

Many reoccurring ear infections are actually a product of allergic skin disease. The lining of the ear canal is just modified skin with more wax glands. When the skin becomes inflamed with allergic skin disease, so does the lining of the ear canal and excessive waxes are produced and tissues become inflamed. If we don't treat the allergy, the treated ear infection comes right back or fails to respond in the first place.

Over time and the regular use of antibiotics to treat the reoccurring ear infections, it is common for resistant "tough bugs" to develop and infect the ear. These bacteria often develop resistance to the previously used antibiotics and don't respond to treatment. Ear cultures are indicated in these cases to identify the infecting bacteria and determine what antibiotic they are sensitive to.

In the end, getting a handle on reoccurring ear infections means identifying the infecting bug or bugs, addressing the underlying problems, changing the environment of the ear canal, choosing the right medications and persistence on maintenance measures to maintain the healthy ear canal. Your pet suffers greatly when they have a chronic ear infection. It is complicated and that is why you need the help of a veterinarian. I will see you at the exam table.