Ear Pain in Dogs Could be Aural Hematoma

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ear pain could indicate AURAL HEMATOMA

If your dog or cat has chronic ear infections or is scratching his ears constantly because of allergies or ear mites, he may develop a painful condition called an aural (or ear) hematoma.

An aural hematoma is a localized collection of blood or serum, which has leaked out of blood vessels and collects between the skin and the ear cartilage of the pinna (the earflap). The pressure of the blood between these two layers causes pain.

The broken blood vessels in aural hematomas are most often caused by violent shaking of the ear in response to intense itching. If you notice a thickening of the ear flap of your pet, your pet may have an aural hematoma, and should be examined by a veterinarian.

Treatment generally requires three steps:

1. Drain the collection of fluid from the ear flap
2. Help prevent more fluid accumulation
3. Treat the underlying cause of the hematoma

There are several methods of treatment depending on the size of the hematoma, shape of the ear, and how "cosmetic" the owner would like the final result to be.

In the first method, the hematoma is drained through an incision, and a small amount of steroid is injected.

The ear is taped up over a rolled bandage and allowed to heal. The ear may later need to be drained again. This procedure may be more favorable in show dogs where it is very important that the ear not be disfigured. This procedure requires more intensive aftercare.

In a second scenario, a small canula is placed in the hematoma and it is allowed to drain. The canula remains in the ear to allow continued drainage until the ear heals.

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Again, the ear may be bandaged.

A third treatment possibility involves draining the hematoma and then suturing the layers of skin and cartilage together in many places to prevent more accumulation of fluid. This method requires general anesthesia and is often reserved for the larger hematomas.

If left untreated, this condition is not only extremely painful for your pet, but it may result in scar formation and permanent disfigurement of the ear, somewhat like a cauliflower ear.

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