

犬、猫に多い耳の病気－外耳炎

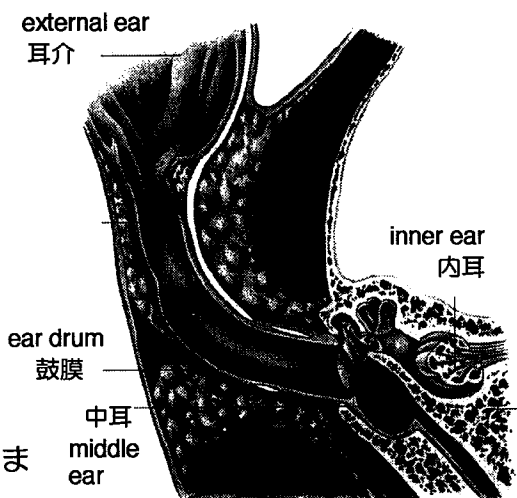
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External Ear Infections

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外 耳炎とは、耳の穴の入り口から内側にある鼓膜までの外耳道の炎症です。外耳炎は一般に細菌や酵母菌の感染によって発生します。特に、垂れ耳の犬や耳道内に多くの毛が生える犬では、耳道内の通気性が悪いため、耳の中が湿っぽくて暖かく、また、油や脂肪を含んでいるため、細菌やカビの発育に理想的な環境となり、外耳炎が好発します。外耳炎の犬や猫には、耳を痛がる、引っ掻く、擦りつける、頭を傾ける、あるいは頭をしきりに振るといった症状がみられ、時には悪臭や排膿を伴います。軽い症状の動物では、週2回程度の外耳炎洗浄治療で良くなりますが、放っておくと繰り返し頭を振ったり、後ろ足で引っ掻くことで耳を傷つけ、その部分が化膿したり、耳軟骨と皮膚の間に血液が溜まって腫れる耳血腫となることがあります。

猫の耳の構造



また、長期にわたる外耳炎では、皮膚のヒダがカリフラワー状に肥厚外耳道の閉塞が認められ、このような場合全身麻酔による外科的処置が必要になります。

さらに、外耳炎の2次的な波及により中耳炎となることがあります。中耳炎は、異物、腫瘍、正しくない耳掃除で鼓膜を破ることなどで、中耳に細菌が到達することで生じます。中耳炎の症状は外耳炎とほぼ同じですが、ひどい場合には顔面神経、交感神経が侵されることがあります。

先に述べた外耳炎、および中耳炎の徴候が認められたときには、まず第1に獣医師の診察を受けることをお勧めします。治療により改善が認められた後には、常に耳を清潔にしておくことで再発を予防できます。耳道内に多くの毛が生える犬では、定期的に耳毛を抜いてあげるのが効果的でしょう。ただし、綿棒などを耳穴に突っ込んで掃除するのはやめましょう。炎症の起きている皮膚を綿棒でこすることにより、さらに炎症を増悪させ、耳垢をかえって奥に押し込んでしまうことになります。家庭では、耳介の汚れを濡らした脱脂綿などでふき取る程度にとどめておき、定期的に獣医師の診察を受ければ、より効果的でしょう。

An external ear infection affects the passage extending from the ear entrance to the eardrum, and is generally caused by bacteria or yeast fungi. Dogs with drooping ears, or a great deal of hair inside the external ear, are particularly susceptible to ear infections, as the ear canal receives little ventilation and the ear remains damp and warm inside. Coupled with the body fat and oils contained in the ear, this provides an ideal environment for bacteria and fungi to multiply. Dogs and cats suffering from an ear infection will scratch their ear, rub their ear against the wall and other surfaces, tilt their head to one side or shake their head constantly. They will also react in pain if touched around the ear. These symptoms will be accompanied by an unpleasant smell and drainage of pus from the ear. In animals with only light symptoms, the infection will clear up with twice-weekly irrigation treatments of the external ear. If left untreated, however, the animal may injure itself by shaking its head incessantly or scratching the ear, in which case the wound may fester, or blood may collect between the cartilage and skin, causing a hematoma. If the ear infection is left untreated for a long time, creases in the skin will become abnormally enlarged, resembling a cauliflower and blocking the auditory canal. When this happens, surgery conducted under general anesthesia is the only cure.

An untreated external ear infection can further lead to inflammation of the middle ear. Middle ear infection is caused by bacteria entering the middle ear through a break in the eardrum due to foreign matter, a tumor, or improper cleaning. The symptoms of middle ear infection are by and large similar to those of external ear infection, but in severe cases can affect the facial and sympathetic nerves.

If you detect any of the ear infection symptoms described above, bring your pet to a veterinarian for examination before you do anything else. Once the condition has improved with treatment, you must keep your pet's ear clean to prevent reinfection. For dogs with a great deal of hair inside the ear canal, regular plucking of excess hair is effective.

Do NOT use a Q-tip (cotton bud) or any other rod-like object for cleaning inside your pet's ears, however.

Rubbing inflamed skin with a Q-tip will only aggravate it, while ear wax may be pushed deeper into the ear. At home, it is enough to wipe dirt off of the auricle (the outer ear up to the ear canal) with a moistened cotton pad or clean cloth. Periodic check-ups by your veterinarian will further ensure that your pet's ears stay free of infection.

