

Relief for Dog Ear Infections

While trying to find the cause of chronic ear infections, dog owners can treat symptoms with daily cleaning.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. We have been having some problems with Max, our Cocker Spaniel-Poodle mix. He started to shake his head a lot and scratch his ears often. We checked his ears and didn't find anything wrong. It continued and we went back to the groomer who gently cleaned his ears with a cotton ball and an ear-cleaning solution. It worked for a while, but the scratching has begun again. We tried a recommended ear-cleaning solution, but it doesn't seem to be helping. What can we do to give Max some peace?

A. Unfortunately, I think you may be treating the symptoms rather than the cause of Max's distress. Most ear infections are caused by allergies, many related to diet. Your little guy may be eating a dog food that is causing his system to produce yeast toxins, a major cause of allergies and skin infections in dogs. His Cocker Spaniel heritage makes him prone to yeast infections, a common problem in that wonderful breed whose ears provide a warm, moist environment perfect for growing bacteria and the accompanying infection. Ask your vet about switching him to a diet that will cut down on yeast in his system, one doesn't contain wheat, corn, or soy. We sell a fish-based holistic food that has worked wonders with dogs who have had this chronic problem.

Swabbing his ears daily using a moistened cotton ball will also help. We recommend an ear wash containing tea tree oil to flush them out regularly, soothing inflamed membranes and cutting down on the gunk that accumulates. Your vet may recommend antibiotics either by injection, orally, or using a topical ointment in Max's ears while you explore a dietary change. Antihistamines may also bring relief for the constant itching and burning that accompanies common ear problems.

Ear infections are serious problems and most are connected to allergy issues. If not corrected, over time not only will they make your dog miserable but they will change the ear tissue itself, making it thick and spongy while constantly secreting a gooey ooze that smells awful, keeping the owner at arm's length, too. I wish you well in finding a solution to make your dog comfortable and nice to be near.