

## Papillon With Ear Problems

**Your vet can help determine the cause of a dog's itchy ears, but you can help relieve his symptoms.**

*By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG*

**Q.** My Papillon has really big ears and he always rubs them on the ground. He sometimes shakes his head and puts his paws over his ears. There is no redness, so I don't think they hurt. Is a common thing in this breed?

**A.** As you probably know, the Papillon got its name because of those large fringed ears. Translated from the French, their name means "butterfly" and these Toy dogs are as beautiful as the enchanting winged creatures for which they are named. Obviously, those famous appendages are causing your little fellow lots of trouble. There are several avenues to pursue to get to the root of the problem.

First, there is the allergy issue. If his scratching, rubbing, and head-shaking started with exposure to carpet, perhaps a contact allergy to some substance within that carpet or a product used to clean it might have set this itching cycle in motion. Sometimes a detergent used to wash a dog's bedding, the shampoo used to bathe him or a lawn care product used in your yard can also cause such misery. Food allergies or flea allergies could also be the cause. Check with your veterinarian about possible allergies that could be causing your pup to itch.

Normal ear wax is a mix of glandular secretions deep inside those long L-shaped ear canals. When allergies or ear infections cause these glands to overproduce, itching, rubbing, and sometimes a foul-smelling discharge will result. While you do some detective work to come up with a possible answer, you can make him more comfortable by using an herbal ear wash to cleanse his ears. Find one made with botanicals that have healing properties like tea tree oil, a gentle natural cleanser that helps dissolve ear wax and remove debris. Avoid those containing alcohol or peroxide as they can sting tender ears.

Put in a few drops then massage the base of the ear so the liquid can drip down inside, then swab out wax and debris with a soft tissue or cotton ball. Because these products are so gentle, you may use them as often as needed. The hair around the ears is probably getting matted from all that scratching, so brush it out as best you can, but be very gentle. If the skin behind his ears is becoming inflamed from all that rubbing and scratching, a medicated bath in oatmeal shampoo also will offer some comfort.