

## Smelly Dog Ears

### **What to do when your dog's ears smell.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. I was wondering what I should do with my mixed-breed puppy's smelly ear problem. He is a little over 6 months old and his whole body and the house smell. I didn't think it was a big deal at first, but it just seems to get worse. What should I do about this?

A. Foul-smelling ears are a pretty good clue that your dog has otitis externa, otherwise known as an outer ear infection. Some dogs are more prone to ear infections because of their anatomy (Basset Hounds, for example), while others have a genetic sensitivity. Some ear infections are due to other problems, such as immune system deficiencies, hormonal imbalances and skin allergies.

In any event, the next step is to get your dog to the vet for an ear swab, a microscopic exam of the swab, an ear flush and medication. Most ear infections in dogs are caused by bacteria or yeast. By examining the ear swabs from both ears, your veterinarian will be able to determine the most likely cause.

A very strong-smelling ear with a brownish tinge can suggest a yeast infection. Fortunately, the treatment is the same for ear infections with either bacteria or yeast. Initially, your veterinarian will perform a thorough ear flush, and should show you how to do it at home. After the ears are dry, several drops of a combination medication is put in each ear.

Once you get the infection under control, you will probably want to flush out your dog's ears once a week. You can use a turkey baster to squirt the flushing solution into the ear, then suck it back out again. You might not want to wear your best clothes for this process, because it can get pretty gross at times. You may use the ear-flush solution that your veterinarian dispenses or mix up your own with a dilute vinegar solution (1 part vinegar to 5 parts water). Give your dog a treat after you are done with his ear flush, and it may go better next time.

You should follow up with your veterinarian to make sure the infection is under control, and that there are no other issues that might cause repeated infections or other ear diseases.

Best,  
Jon Geller, DVM

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