

Ear's the Problem

What can be done about this dog's strange ear issue?

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My 5-year-old Miniature Schnauzer, Moses, has stiff whiskers that grow in his ear. The whiskers rub his eardrum or ear structures and are so uncomfortable, he doesn't want to move, he paws at his ears, shakes his head and vomits frequently (without being sick).

Our vet carefully removes the whiskers (about every six to eight weeks) and has sedated Moses twice in five years to get the whiskers that are too dangerous to remove without injuring the eardrum if he moves.

Do you know of any other options to manage the whisker problem? Otherwise, Moses is a very healthy, active, fun-loving and gentle dog.

A. What an unusual problem! Your veterinarian is correct in that removing these whiskers near the eardrum could cause some damage if Moses was to move his head. I once removed foxtails that were lodged near a dog's eardrum only to have the patient lose his sense of balance for several hours after the procedure. Unfortunately, the dog was scheduled to be in the show ring right after the procedure, but could barely walk!

Sedating with appropriate drugs should have no long-lasting negative effects on Moses, so I suggest you continue what you are doing.

I wonder if one of those battery-operated rotary nose hair removers could work? Sometimes you have to get creative, especially with conditions that are not written up in medical literature.

Best,
Jon Geller, DVM

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