

## Regular Care and Meds Fix Dog's Ear Infections

**Cleaning comes first, then medication for dog's recurring ear infections.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. I have a 6-year-old Poodle. Brandi seems to always have an ear infection. Is there anyway I could put a stop to them?

A. Repeating ear infections are frustrating for dog owners, uncomfortable for dogs, and one of the most common reasons for visits to the veterinarian, according to the records of pet health insurance companies.

The main causes of repeated ear infections are improper cleaning of the ear prior to medication, incomplete medication (stopping the medication before the prescribed time), resistant bacteria, an abnormal ear canal (genetic), or an underlying condition such as allergies (known as atopy in dogs).

Once an ear infection occurs, it is important to visit your veterinarian so he or she can determine the infection's source. The most common causes are yeast and bacteria. Depending on the cause, your veterinarian can prescribe the appropriate medication.

You should thoroughly clean your Poodle's ears before applying the medication. (This can be somewhat messy, so don't do it just before you go to work wearing your best outfit.) Use an ear-cleaning solution prescribed by your veterinarian. Squirt a liberal amount in your dog's ear until it starts to overflow. Squeeze the ear shut, and vigorously massage the base of the ear for several minutes. Repeat this procedure two or three times.

Let the ear dry out for 10 minutes, using cotton balls (not a Q-tip) to assist with the drying. Once the ear is dry, apply the prescribed amount of medication into the ear, and massage once again.

You can also mix up your own ear cleaning solution at home to help prevent ear infections. Mix vinegar and water, one part to three, and squirt a liberal amount in your dogs' ears once a month. Use a turkey baster to suck some back up, and then flush it back in. Your dog may not appreciate the procedure, so offer a treat or other reward as a bribe.

If you don't treat the ear infections, your dog's ear canals can get so narrow and inflamed from thickening of the cartilage that major surgery may be required to remove the canal's lining.

If, despite regular cleaning and appropriate medication, the infections keep coming back, have your dog checked out for atopy.