

Regular Care Helps Halt Dog's Ear Scratching

A little monthly care can reduce bacteria and yeast in dogs' ears.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. A couple of months ago the vet told me my dog had a yeast infection in his ear. With medication, it went away for a while but now it is back. What causes this? What is the best way to keep this from coming back again?

A. Yeast and bacteria love to grow and thrive in the moist, warm environment of a dog's ear. Some dog ears appear to have more hospitable environments than others (think Basset Hound). Regular cleaning with either a prescription, over-the-counter ear cleaner or a homemade solution can prevent recurring ear infections.

Here's how you can keep your dog's ears clean with a homemade solution:

Mix up a solution of three parts water to one part white vinegar. Use a turkey baster to fill your dog's ear with the solution, then suck some back out and squirt it back in. (Wear some old clothes or a smock while doing this). After you squirt the solution back in, massage the base of the ear for five seconds or so, or as long your dog will allow. The vinegar in the water will kill many types of bacteria. It should also keep the ear clean and less hospitable for other organisms, such as yeast, to grow.

Do this once a month or so, perhaps less often if you have a small dog. Between cleanings, if your dog scratches at his ears, shakes his head, or acts like his ears are driving him crazy, he probably has either an ear infection or something like a grass seed stuck in his ear canal. At that point, he needs a full ear exam by a veterinarian.