

Chronic Ear Infections in Dogs

Hope for chronic ear infections.

T. J. Dunn, DVM

Posted: Mon Jun 27 00:00:00 PDT 2005

Case HistoryHunter is a 3-year-old Golden Retriever owned by the Swenson family in Rhinelander, Wis. For two years they diligently tried to keep Hunter's ears clean, visited the veterinarian often, and administered medications. Both ear canals became so overgrown with scar tissue that it was impossible to treat Hunter medically. His life was miserable, and due to the odor of his infected ears, he no longer got the hugs and kisses he deserved; and the odor from his ears was noticeable throughout the home.

"When we found out that a surgery could be done on his ear canals," say the Swensons, "we started to think that maybe this would be his best chance for a happy life. Plus, we were quite tired of all the cleanings and medications, and still not seeing much good come of it. Now that he has healed from surgery he's like a new dog! He's so happy and frisky. You can see the joy he has in his life again. The kids stopped playing with him a long time ago, due to the odor and messiness of his ear infections ... but now they are overjoyed. They've got their dog back."

How can you know when to consider surgical intervention? Veterinarian Dan Degner is a board-certified specialist in veterinary surgery, working at Michigan Veterinary Specialists in Auburn Hills, Mich. He lectures at national surgical meetings and teaches microsurgical techniques. He says, "Surgery is an excellent option for dogs that have chronic ear infections that are unresponsive to medical therapy. If a dog has developed such a resistant infection that no medication will work, then surgery should be done. In addition, if the ear canal has become thickened and scarred, surgery should be done." The message is that surgery should be considered long before advanced scar tissue and bony infiltration occurs. If your dog has been suffering from long-term ear troubles, consulting with a veterinarian experienced in lateral ear canal surgery could give him a new lease on life.