

## MANAGEMENT OF OTITIS EXTERNA (EXTERNAL EAR DISEASE)

### WHAT IS EAR DISEASE?

OTITIS EXTERNA (OE) OR EXTERNAL EAR DISEASE MEANS INFLAMMATION OF THE EXTERNAL EAR CANAL CAUSING HEAD SHAKING, RUBBING AND SCRATCHING AT THE EAR. THIS IS A VERY UNCOMFORTABLE DISEASE IN DOGS AND CATS AND REQUIRES GOOD COMPLIANCE WITH MEDICATION AND CLEANING TO CURE OR CONTROL IT.

### WHAT CAUSES EAR DISEASE?

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT PRIMARY CAUSES OF OE; ATOPY (ITCHY SKIN DISEASE), KERATINISATION DISORDERS, HORMONAL DISORDERS, TUMOURS OR POLYPS WITHIN THE EAR OR FOREIGN BODIES IN THE EAR. THESE PRIMARY CAUSES **INFLAME** THE EXTERNAL EAR CANAL AND SET UP CONDITIONS IN THE EAR IN WHICH BACTERIA AND YEASTS OVERPOPULATE AND CAUSE **INFECTION** IN THE EAR.

CERTAIN BREEDS ARE MORE PRONE TO OE, BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE PRONE TO THE PRIMARY CAUSES OF EAR DISEASE, SUCH AS LABRADORS, COCKER SPANIELS AND WEST HIGHLAND WHITE TERRIERS. OTHER DOGS THAT ARE PRONE TO OE MAY HAVE FLOPPY EARS, EXCESSIVE EAR HAIR, SWIM OR BATHE REGULARLY, HAVE NARROWED EAR CANALS OR OVERPRODUCE WAX IN THE EAR.

### HOW DO I TREAT IT?

TREATMENT IS A COMBINATION OF MANAGING OR CURING THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE **INFLAMMATION** AND TREATING THE **INFECTION**.

IF YOUR DOG HAS ATOPY (ITCHY SKIN DISEASE) OR YOUR VET HAS DIAGNOSED ANOTHER PROBLEM IN THE EAR THEY WILL ADVISE YOU ON THE BEST TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR THESE CONDITIONS. IN THESE CASES THE EAR DISEASE MAY NOT BE CURABLE BUT MAY BE A LIFELONG PROBLEM THAT CAN BE MANAGED.

HOWEVER, MOST DOGS WITH EAR DISEASE WILL BE TREATED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:

- 1) REGULAR EAR CLEANING USING LIQUID OIL-BASED EAR CLEANERS - THESE GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE EAR CANAL AND HELP TO MOVE THE WAX FROM THE EAR AND SOOTHE THE EAR CANAL. REGULAR EAR CLEANING MAY BE REQUIRED IN THE LONG-TERM FOR THOSE DOGS THAT ARE PRONE TO EAR DISEASE.
- 2) MEDICATED EAR DROPS - THESE NEED TO BE INSTILLED INTO THE EAR CANAL AND HAVE A DUAL EFFECT - THEY TREAT THE **INFLAMMATION** AS WELL AS KILLING THE **INFECTION**.
- 3) RECHECK WITH THE VET AFTER 7-10 DAYS TO MAKE SURE THE TREATMENT HAS WORKED. THE SIGNS OF OE MAY HAVE RESOLVED BUT SOMETIMES THE INFLAMMATION OR INFECTION IS STILL PRESENT, IT IS BEST TO HAVE THIS CHECKED SO THAT MORE TREATMENT CAN BE PRESCRIBED IF NECESSARY.

### THE TREATMENT ISN'T WORKING, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

MAKE SURE YOU TAKE YOUR DOG BACK TO SEE THE VET. IF EAR DISEASE IS LEFT UNTREATED IT IS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE FOR THE DOG BUT ALSO CAUSES NARROWING OF THE EAR CANAL MAKING FURTHER TREATMENT MORE DIFFICULT. IF YOUR DOG SUFFERS FROM RECURRENT EAR DISEASE FURTHER TESTING WILL BE REQUIRED. WE CAN TAKE A SWAB FROM THE EAR AND CHECK WHAT BUGS ARE PRESENT AND TEST FOR ATOPY. SOME DOGS MAY NEED TO BE ANAESTHETISED FOR A PROPER LOOK IN THE EAR CANAL TO ASSESS ANY DAMAGE OR PROBLEMS NOT SEEN WITH A CONSCIOUS EAR EXAMINATION.