

The importance of clean ears

It's one part of our cat and dog's grooming routine that we frequently forget – what with bathing and nail trims – cleaning out their ears. Cleaning your pet's ears on a regular basis will help prevent serious problems down the road. Over cleaning their ears can also be a problem, as it can disrupt the natural balance, leading to irritation and infections. Usually cleaning once a week is sufficient to keep them healthy – but your vet can recommend how often would be best for your particular dog.

Even though we keep mentioning dogs, all of this also applies to cats, and although cats rarely have ear infections, it's still possible. A regular schedule of examination and routine cleaning will help keep them free from pain and problems.



All dogs build up wax and dirt in their ears, but for dogs with floppy or hairy ears (as this allows moisture to accumulate in their ear), or dogs that spend a lot of time in the water, this can lead to further problems. Diet and allergies can also play a part in infections; allergies lead to inflammation of the intestines, which throws off the entire body's immune system. Some dogs are more sensitive to any yeast products (like brewer's yeast), or from diets high in starchy ingredients, which support yeast growth.

If you see any of the following in your dog's ears, it indicates an infection and they should be seen by their vet immediately:

- Swelling or inflammation (ears are hot to the touch)
- Off-color discharge
- Foul odor
- Noticeable signs of pain when the ears are touched
- Excessive scratching at ears, constant head shaking, and even vocalization can also indicate a problem

Never attempt to treat an infection on your own; infections can be very painful, and if not treated properly can lead to permanent damage and hearing loss.

Inspect the ears first, looking for wax and dirt buildup, like in the picture. Use cotton balls to clean their ears; Just like with us, do not use a Q-tip inside the ear canal, only on the external, as it can both push debris further down into the ear canal, or even puncture the ear drum.



Homemade cleaners made with 50% water and 50% vinegar or hydrogen peroxide are very effective for dogs that have chronic yeast or bacterial infections. If you're looking for something a little stronger while still being effective and gentle, check out our top products:



Vet's Best makes two excellent ear cleaning formulas. Their Dog Ear Relief Wash uses carefully formulated, natural ingredients (chamomile, yucca, and clove oil) to control odor, itching, and discomfort. Vet's Best Dry Dog Ear Relief liquid solution turns into a soft powder when dry, and uses unique, carefully formulated, natural ingredients (calendula, aloe vera, and clove oil) to control odor, itching, and discomfort in between your dog's baths. Ear dry is great for dogs known to be predisposed to ear infections (like those with floppy ears), to help keep them dry and infection free. Both formulas are alcohol-free and non-stinging.

ZYMOX® Ear Cleanser provides an effective, non-toxic way to manage dirty ears. The addition of Lycoperoxidase, Lactoferrin and Lysozyme, which have natural bio-active properties for mild microbe control, plus gentle cleaning surfactants, makes ZYMOX® Ear Cleanser perfect for cleaning dirty ears. Does not contain harsh chemicals or cleaners to irritate sensitive ears. Leaves ears smelling fresh. Zymox ear solution is an over the counter remedy for treating mild ear infections, using the same ingredients as the wash, but with a glycerin base to soften debris and 0.5% hydrocortisone to reduce inflammation.



How to clean their ears.



Clean your dog's ears in a mud room, outside, or a bathroom. They'll most likely shake their head, and you want a space easy to clean. Place a small amount of your preferred cleaning solution in your dog's ears and massage the base. Let them shake, as this will help loosen debris. Wipe the ear out with a cotton ball, repeating as often to remove the cleaner.

You can make ear cleaning even easier by using an ear cleaning wipe instead of applying a cleaning solution and removing it. Our favorite products are:

Nootie Ear Wipes gently removes daily dirt & odor when used for routine ear cleaning in a healthy ear. Helps eliminate ear odor. It may be used for dogs and cats of any age. It is infused with the delicate scent of Sweet Pea and Vanilla. Ingredients: Purified Water, Propylene Glycol, DOSS, Benzoic Acid, Salicylic Acid,



Pro-Sense Plus Ear Cleansing wipes help maintain clean ears and reduce irritation by providing a gentle, soothing Aloe Vera formula. These wipes are suitable for dogs of all sizes and the enzymatic formula helps Remove Dirt, Debris and Wax

While cleaning ears is really a simple task for most people, it's important enough that, if you cannot do it yourself, they be taken to their vet or favorite groomer to have it done there.