

# Hematoma of the Ear

An aural hematoma is a pool of blood that collects between the skin and the cartilage of a pet's ear flap. It's typically caused by overly aggressive ear scratching or head shaking that results from an ear infection. Dogs and cats can both suffer ear hematomas, though dogs (particularly those prone to skin allergies and ear infections) are more prone to them. Treatments range from draining the hematoma with a needle, to surgical correction of the problem.

## Diagnosis:

A pet with an ear hematoma will have a fluid-filled swelling on all or just part of the ear flap (called the "pinna"). Sometimes the swelling will seem firm, other times, soft and fluctuant. It may occlude the ear canal or simply involve the very tip of the ear.

A veterinarian can diagnose this condition during a physical exam. However, it is also important to diagnose underlying conditions that may lead to excessive ear scratching or head shaking. The veterinarian will most likely inspect the ear canal and swab it for a sample to examine under the microscope for signs of parasites or infection.

With an underlying ear infection or , the pet will most likely need to have the ear canals cleaned and treated with appropriate ointments or solutions. Resolution of the underlying problem will help prevent another ear hematoma. Allergic skin disease, however, has a way of leading to chronically affected ears that may suffer recurrent ear hematomas unless the problem is adequately addressed.

## Repair:

Surgical repair is often considered the most effective treatment for ear hematomas. While under anesthesia, an incision is made along the length of the hematoma on the inner surface of the ear. After the fluid and blood clots are removed, the ear flap is pressed between two foam pads and sutured to apply pressure while healing. The sutures hold the inner and outer surfaces against each other so that when scar tissue forms, the two surfaces are smooth and not lumpy. The pads generally stay in place for a few weeks while the so that fluid will continue to drain as the ear heals.

In some cases, veterinarians may draw out the fluid with a needle and syringe. Medication may also be injected into the space to reduce swelling and inflammation. However, it is very common for the hematoma to return with this procedure.

Without treatment, an ear hematoma will eventually heal on its own, but the pet often experiences weeks of discomfort. In addition, the two sides of the ear often form thickened, wrinkled scar tissue, so the ear won't look or feel natural. This cosmetic issue may not make a difference to an owner.