

# What to do for my dog's *itchy, sore ears?*

Use this handout to learn more about what otitis is and what you can do to help your pup's precious ears.

There are  
three stages  
of otitis.

- 1** In the beginning, the external ear canal is affected, and you may notice that your dog is shaking its head or pawing at its ear. Your dog might also have an ear discharge, with or without odor.
- 2** In the next stage, the disease spreads to the middle ear, which includes the eardrum.
- 3** In the final stage, otitis spreads to the inner ear, which houses your dog's balance system. At this point, some dogs are reluctant to open their mouths or chew and have a pronounced head tilt, balance problems, and drooping lips or eye-lids. Luckily, most cases of otitis are caught during the first stage, and, at this stage, the chances for getting your dog's ears back in tip-top shape are good.

## How does it develop?

Many things cause dogs' ears to become inflamed, including ear mites, a bacterial or yeast infection, a foreign object or mass within the ear, allergies, or medical conditions that allow infection to develop within the ear. Some breeds are more likely to develop problems because of their ear structure. It can take time and a variety of diagnostic tests for your veterinarian to determine the underlying cause. But this cause must be identified, or the problem can worsen and spread farther into the ear, causing your dog intense pain.

## How do I help?

Follow your veterinarian's instructions for cleaning your dog's ears and administering medications. Be sure to bring your dog in for each recheck appointment your veterinarian schedules, even after the inflammation has subsided. Otitis often recurs in dogs, and the medication that cleared it up the first time may not work the next time because a different type of infection may have developed. So be sure to see your veterinarian if signs do recur.

