



Oakland Veterinary Referral Services



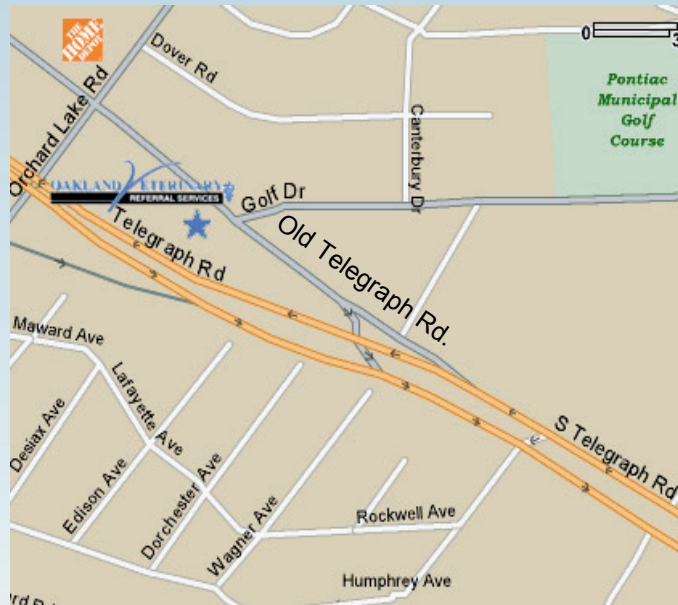
DERMATOLOGY & ALLERGY

Chronic Ear Disease

Specialty veterinary medicine is a relatively new advancement in pet care. Similar to human medicine specialists, board-certified veterinary specialists focus their education and services in one specific area.

Have you been referred? Things to bring at the time of your consultation:

- Ear cleaning solution used
- Ear medications used recently
- List of diets fed to your pet
- Other medications your pet is being given
- Medical history of the ear problems, including response to previous treatment, duration of treatment, and whether problems appear to be seasonal



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Why Does Your Pet Have Recurrent Ear Infections?

The list of potential causes of chronic ear infections is quite extensive but is often divided into three categories for simplification: predisposing conditions, primary causes, and perpetuating factors.

Predisposing conditions may include the anatomical conformation of your pet's ear canal, long pendulous ear flaps, hair within the canal, increased humidity in the ear canal associated with frequent bathing or swimming or an obstruction in the canal, or mechanical trauma during cleaning as is associated with irritant antiseptic solutions or with the routine use of swabs or plucking of hair.

Primary causes of ear disease may include allergic disease (atopy, food allergy or contact allergy), parasitic disease (*Otodectes cyanotis*, *Demodex canis*, *Demodex cati*), tumors of the ear canal, foreign bodies (such as a grass awn), autoimmune disease, keratinization disorders, or endocrine disease.

But it is often the perpetuating factors that are most obvious. These factors include bacteria and/or yeast in the outer ear canal. When outer ear canal infections persist longer than 6-8 weeks in duration, they usually involve the middle ear as well. Ear infections often occur as a result of other conditions; so until the underlying cause of the infection has been identified, your pet will likely be at risk for recurrent problems.



What Can Be Done For Your Pet?

The workup for each patient will be unique, depending on his or her individual case. Investigation of the primary disease may require bloodwork, a diet trial, or intradermal skin testing. Predisposing factors will also be considered. But much of the workup for the ear infection will focus on the perpetuating problem, the ear infection itself.

- Microscopic examination of samples from the ear allows us to classify the type of infection and plan the appropriate therapy, usually daily treatment with a topical medication until negative cytology is achieved, and then continuation of therapy for 7-10 days past negative cytology.

- Cleaning the debris out of the ear is essential for successful treatment; otherwise the debris will prevent topical medications from making contact with affected skin. Most of the time general anesthesia is required to thoroughly clean and flush the ear canals.
- If it is suspected that the infection has spread to the middle ear, flushing and culturing of the middle ear may additionally be needed. Myringotomy is the term for surgical penetration of the ear drum to permit cleaning and culturing of the middle ear. Middle ear infections are best addressed with oral antibiotics or antifungals
- Video otoscopy (seen below) allows for clearer visualization of the deeper structure of the ear canal. Photographic records can be kept of your pet's ear canals, enabling you to see the condition of your dog's ear canal before and after the procedure. Video otoscopy facilitates the deep flushing of the outer ear canal as well as the middle ear canal, if needed. As with traditional ear flushing, video otoscopy typically requires general anesthesia. Some pets also require a course of steroids to reduce inflammation prior to the procedure.

At OVRS we can treat your pet's chronic ear infection and help make your pet more comfortable. However, it is important to note that in most cases the ear infection is not the primary problem. During your consultation we can help diagnose your pet's underlying condition, with the goal of reducing your pet's risk of recurrent ear infections.

