

# Doggie ear disease:

## What to know, what to tell your vet

If you think your pup is suffering from ear problems, hightail it to your veterinarian. Think through these questions to prepare your pooch for an ear examination—and help him heal faster.

**W**hen your dog starts to show signs of ear trouble—things like scratching the ear, a bad odor, redness or swelling around the ears, crusts or scabs on the inside of the outer ear, hair loss, head shaking, a brown, yellow or bloody discharge, among the many— it's time to hightail it to the veterinarian.

Many ear diseases look the same—it's the underlying causes that vary. Before your veterinary team can diagnose the specific problem, they'll need a detailed history. This starts by getting your dog's medical record. If the dog has had previous skin or ear disease, getting a copy of the medical records may help tremendously in developing a list of possible diagnoses. And just like a good detective novel, your veterinarian will begin at the start and retrace the "footsteps" looking for clues along the way.

### Questions to consider

- 1. When did the symptoms** *first* occur? This is an important question. Your veterinarian isn't asking when this current episode of symptoms occurred, but the very first time you noticed symptoms X, Y or Z.
- 2. Has your dog** EVER had problems with excessive licking, scratching, chewing, biting or rubbing? Has your dog EVER had ear problems before this episode? If so, when? What medication was used to treat the problem, and how did your dog respond to that treatment?
- 3. Where does the dog live**—indoors, outdoors or both? Think about how you would describe the environment, especially the outdoor environment.
- 4. Is your dog** on heartworm and flea preventive? If so, what product, how often is it administered and is it year round or seasonal?
- 5. Are there any** other pets in the household? If so, what kind? Are they suffering from any of the same symptoms as your dog? If you have cats, do they go outside?;
- 6. Are any of the humans** in the household showing "new" skin problems? If so, what kind?

**7. Do you board the dog**, take her to obedience school, training or to the groomers? If so, when was the last time?

**8. Do you know** if the parents of the dog or any siblings have pruritic skin problems? If so, what was done and how did the dogs respond to treatment?

**9. What does** your dog eat?

**10. How do the ears** seem today? Are the ears the best, worse or average since the problem began?

**11. Do you notice whether** your dog's symptoms are better, worse during different seasons, or do you see no difference?

### On to the exam

After you answer these questions for your veterinarian, the next step will likely be a complete physical examination of your dog, followed by a dermatologic examination. By preparing your answers ahead of time, you can help your veterinarian suss out the culprit for those itchy, uncomfortable ears—and get your pup on the road to recovery.

