



Grafton Dog Obedience Club Inc.

CARING FOR YOUR DOG'S EARS

Checking and cleaning your dog's ears if necessary should be a part of your routine grooming procedure. If your dog's ears are clean and healthy when you do your routine check, leave them alone.

The dog's ear canal is "L" shaped, with the ear canal going down then turning almost at right angles before ending at the eardrum. As with humans, a dog's ears are delicate and care must be taken to avoid injury. Avoid using cotton buds as these can push wax and debris further into the ear canal causing blockages or damaging the eardrum.

Dogs with drooping ears, or dogs with hair inside the ear canal are more susceptible to ear infections due to lack of air circulation. Dogs that swim a lot may also be susceptible to ear problems due to water in the ear canal.

Check inside the dog's ear for any sign of dirt, debris or wax. Smell inside the ear (an unpleasant smell may indicate infection or debris deep in the ear canal). For routine cleaning, use a dampened cotton ball and wipe any debris from inside the earflap. If there is wax build up in the ear canal, use a special ear cleaner (available from your vet or pet shop) to dissolve the wax. Allow the dog to shake its head, then wipe away any dissolved debris or wax with more cotton balls. Repeat the process until the ears are clean and no more debris or wax is present.

If there is an unpleasant smell to the ears, or if there is an obvious discharge, see your vet or health care professional for advice.

Dogs that have hairy ear canals are more susceptible to a build up of wax and debris. For those dogs it is usually recommended the excess hair be plucked out to improve air circulation in the ear canal, prevent the build up of excessive wax and debris and reduce the risk of ear infection. When plucking hair from the ear canal, remove only a couple of hairs at a time. If you are unsure about how to do this, check with your vet or a professional groomer.

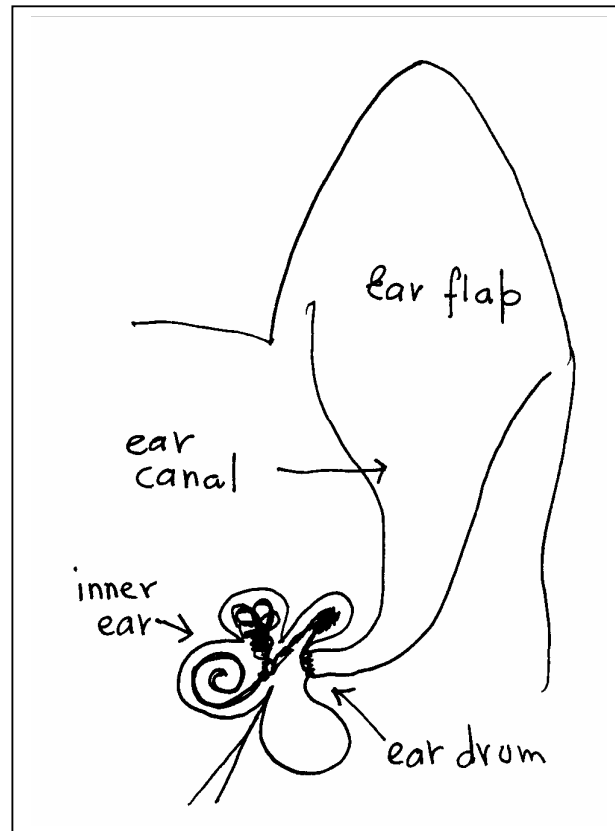
When bathing your dog, reduce the risk of getting water in the ears by putting cotton balls in the ears before bathing or hold the earflap closed as you wash and rinse around this area.

The following method can help prevent ear problems in dogs that swim regularly or are susceptible to ear infections. Don't use this if your dog's ears are already infected or if there is broken skin as it will sting! First clean the ear as described above, then using an eye dropper, drop in 40 – 60 drops (depending on the size of your dog) of a mixture of 1 part lemon juice or apple cider vinegar to 3 parts warm water. Massage the base of the ear gently, then allow the dog to shake out the mixture. Alternatively use a commercial product from your vet or pet shop.

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Anatomy of the dog's ear (simplified illustration)