



CT showing calcification (red arrow) of left ear canal and filling of middle ear with fluid (yellow arrow)

What is ear disease?

The ear consists of an external (outer), middle and inner ear. The most common cause of ear disease is otitis externa or inflammation of the external ear canal. This can extend to the middle ear. This can be caused by a multitude of factors such as parasites, allergies and hormonal conditions. Common signs of ear disease include shaking of the head/ears, pain when touching the ears and a smelly discharge. Severe ear disease can result in nerve damage manifesting as a head tilt, facial nerve paralysis (drooping of the face) and vestibular disease (loss of balance, circling, incoordination).

How do we investigate ear disease?

The ear canals are thoroughly examined under sedation or anaesthesia. A swab will be taken from the ear canals for bacterial and fungal culture, as well as cytology. As ear disease is often associated with generalised skin disease, further dermatological investigations may be required. Imaging with radiographs or a CT will be performed to assess the bony structures around the ear and identify the presence of a middle ear infection which may affect treatment.

How can we treat ear disease?

Most cases respond well to medical management including ear cleaning (often under anaesthesia) and topical ear medications. When medical management fails, then surgery is indicated. The most common surgical procedure performed is a TECA. This is where the entire ear canal is removed to destroy the source of infection. This procedure also allows us to access the middle ear and resolve any middle ear infection.

What kind of aftercare is required following a TECA?

Your pet will be hospitalised for 1-2 days. Your pet will be discharged with pain relief. Suture removal will be required 7-10 days post-operatively. A buster collar will be required until suture removal. Only short lead exercise is allowed until suture removal. Any underlying cause of the ear disease, e.g. allergies or hormonal conditions, may require long-term medical management.

What kind of outcome is expected following a TECA?

Over 90% of patients are completely disease and pain free. Whilst complications are common, most are relatively minor and resolve with time and little treatment. Complications that can occur include reduced hearing (some pets may be completely deaf), recurrent abscesses if infected tissue remains and nerve damage. The cosmetic appearance following a TECA on dogs with floppy ears is very good. Cats and dogs with erect ears may have some drooping of the ear flap, but generally the outcome is cosmetically acceptable.

Chestergates Veterinary Specialists

Tel: 01244 853 823 Fax: 01244 853 824
Email: info@chestergates.org.uk
Website: www.chestergates.org.uk

Units E & F, Telford Court
Gates Lane,
Chester CH1 6LT

