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Aural Haematoma

What is an Aural Haematoma?

Each one of your pet's ear lobes (pinna) is made up of two layers of opposing skin held together with fibrous tissue with nerves and blood vessels running between the two layers. An aural haematoma (blood blister of the ear) forms when one or more of these vessels rupture and the leaking blood pockets in the space between the two layers of skin.

What causes them to form?

This damage to the blood vessels may be caused by any form of trauma like being hit by a car or bitten by another animal, but it is most likely that your pet actually caused the trauma. Ear infections, mites, inflammation and foreign objects can be very uncomfortable and your pet's first reaction would probably be to shake their head or scratch vigorously at the ear. This 'self-abuse' can very easily damage the fragile blood vessels within the pinna and cause an aural haematoma to form.

How are they treated?

Various differing approaches may be tried in the treatment of aural haematomas. If there is only a mild swelling and there are other complicating factors (like old age or other ongoing disease problems) then your vet may suggest a course of medication and leaving the haematoma to be partially resorbed with time. Alternatively, your vet might decide to drain the fluid out of your pet's pinna and then inject an anti-inflammatory drug into the remaining space to prevent the haematoma from re-forming.

Most cases, however, require surgery. This involves giving your pet a full general anaesthetic, draining the fluid from the pinna and then suturing the two layers of skin together. This approach allows your vet to remove all of the fluid and suturing the two layers together forms a strong fibrous bond between the two and helps to prevent a recurrence.

With any of the possible treatment options, your vet may also have to address any underlying causative factors like fleas, ear mites, infection and foreign objects in the ear canal. Dealing with these problems makes treating the haematoma for your pet much more likely to be a successful, permanent solution to this uncomfortable and unsightly condition.

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