

Ear Mites in Dogs

Keeping an eye on your canine friend's ears

Overview

Scratch scratch...shake shake.... If your best friend is doing this constantly, or if you smell something less than pleasant coming from his or her ears, the culprit may be ear mites. Ear mites look like miniscule crabs. Their preferred environment is your dog's ear canal, although once in a great while they venture out of the ear, moving to the head and body.

What's particularly unpleasant about these little crab-like mites is what they eat: namely, your dog! They love to feed on the tissue debris and fluids inside the ear canal—ICK!

Ear mites are most commonly found in puppies and dogs that have poor immune systems (and they can also be found in [cats](#)). They have a three-week life cycle and reproduce rapidly.

Symptoms

So, what will you see if your pooch is plagued with these nasty microscopic mites?

Symptoms include:

- Scratching
- Increased earwax
- Thick, black-colored ear discharge
- Head shaking
- Sores around or on the ears
- Itching of the head and neck

Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical on your dog, paying close attention to the ears. The veterinarian will want to know if he or she spends time outdoors, with the possibility of being exposed to other animals. Additionally, it is important to relate if he or she has recently spent time in a boarding facility or another environment where there is regular contact among animals.

Diagnostic tests that your veterinarian will likely suggest include:

- Ear swab and microscopic evaluation to identify the presence of the mites

- Visual inspection of the ear canal with an otoscope
- Other routine laboratory tests such as blood work, a chemistry profile, and electrolytes to screen for organ function, infection, and electrolyte status if your dog or puppy is in poor body condition or lethargic
- Fecal tests to rule out other parasites

Treatment

Your veterinarian may clean your dog's ears while he or she is there for her exam. Most likely, your vet will prescribe parasiticides that will kill the mites, as well as an ear cleaner to keep the ear canal clean of debris.

Prevention

Keeping your dog's ears clean is the best defense against ear mites, check them often.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian - they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.

[Beware the Bug](#)

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[Demodicosis in Dogs](#)

[Demodicosis in Cats](#)

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