

Elsie's Ear Powder™

Ear Care

Disclaimer: *This information is provided for informational purposes only. It is assumed that you are working with your veterinarian on the medical care of your dog.*

The information contained in this document is current at the time of this writing and is accurate to the best of our knowledge.

Some home remedies for ear problems, which are used successfully by many dog owners, are given below.

Anatomy: The dog ear canal is deep, dark, and moist. Frequently the hair in the canal grows similarly to the thickness and speed of that on the body. At the bottom of the canal is the ear drum, and great care must be taken not to damage the drum. The ear canal glands make wax to protect the delicate tissues. This dark, warm, and moist environment is a great place for yeast and bacterial infections, mites, ticks, and grass seeds to accumulate.

Weekly Examination: Check the ear every week. You want to verify that the ear smells sweet with no bad odours. The ear should appear clean with no dark spots, dirt or debris in the ear. An infection or a foreign body in the ear is suspected if your dog has brown material in the ear, shakes its head regularly, or cries when the head is shaken. You may need veterinary help to get the problem under control. By the same token, if it isn't "broke" then don't fix it, in other words, if what you are doing for your dog is working don't change what you are doing. You may need to experiment to find what works best for you and your dog.

Plucking: Some dogs seem to have very little ear canal hair, while others seem to have a lot. Plucking of ear hair is a matter of preference. There are people who don't pluck ear hair and people who do, and both can be quite passionate that "their way" is the best way. You may not want to pluck ear hair at all unless there is a lot of it. You may choose to pluck just a little in order to thin it out, or you can pluck until every hair is gone. Another option to open up the ear to allow for better air flow may be to simply trim all excess hair from the inside ear leather, or even the outside leather. You can also trim the hair inside the canal very carefully. If you choose to pluck the ear hair, use a well-lighted area. Place the dog on its side on a grooming table and carefully pull out the hair with haemostats. These instruments can be obtained from most grooming supply services. Using a bit of ear powder will assist in being able to grasp the hair effectively. Be careful not to pinch the skin in the ear canal with the hemostats. If the dog has a significant amount of hair, pull out a small portion of the hair in several sessions over the period of a week, skipping a day or two between sessions. Heavy pulling of hair in a single session can cause inflammation of the ear canal. This creates an ideal environment for bacterial or fungal growth.

Washing the Ear: There are many preparations available for washing the ears. Some people prefer to use rubbing alcohol, but it can be quite irritating to a sensitive ear canal especially if not diluted with water and/or vinegar. Regardless of the solution used, massage a small amount into the dog's ear canal. After a few seconds, rinse the ear canal with a gentle stream of warm water. The dog will shake its head as soon as you allow. A cotton ball may be used to gently blot any excess water. When you dry the dog, open the ear back and gently allow some of the air from the dryer to flow across the ear as you dry the hair on the inside of the ear leather. You want to make sure that you get the inside of the ear canal completely dry.

When cleaning your dog's ears, remember to never insert anything into your dog's ear canal such as ear buds. Hemostats are commonly used to remove hair and cotton balls may be used to remove moisture. If you notice something in the ear that does not wash out, please have your vet examine the dog's ears. Do not try to remove any foreign object yourself. If your dog loves the water, make sure that you clean the ears and put a drying agent into them after every swimming session. If your dog has long or thick ear hair, you must be sure that the ear hair is also dry before applying a drying agent into the ear canal.

Treatment with a Drying Agent:

An ear treatment may be used weekly to monthly. One home remedy recipe is 1/3 part white vinegar, 1/3 part rubbing alcohol, and 1/3 part water. All of these products work similarly. Vinegar lowers the pH so that most bacteria and fungus cannot grow. Alcohol kills germs and dries the canal, and water provides dilution so that the vinegar and alcohol are not too strong for the tissues.

Treatment of Infections:

If the dog has wet, damp, smelly ears or has gunk in the ears, it may be an indication of a mild infection. It may be treated by using one of the treatment recipes twice daily for two weeks, then once daily for an additional two weeks, then once a week for an additional month. Weekly to monthly treatments as listed above should keep the ear healthy after that.

If the problem is not resolving quickly, or gets worse, you will need to make an appointment with your veterinarian. If your dog has pus in the ear, do not delay. You should immediately seek veterinary help and not use any home remedy in the ear. A culture must be taken to be sure that any prescribed antibiotic is the correct one for that infection. Many antibiotics, including most of the "mycins" can damage the hearing of your dog. Some topical drugs often induce allergies. Be sure to discuss these issues with your veterinarian when deciding on a course of treatment.

Warning:

A severe infection may result in ear drum perforation. **NEVER put a cleanser or medications in an ear that may have an open ear drum without first consulting your veterinarian.** Many agents that are safe to use in an inflamed canal can be VERY dangerous if put into the middle ear and deafness or worse can result. If you have any doubt whether the drum is intact, do nothing until you consult with a vet.

For the serious chronic ear infection your veterinarian may recommend a short course of topical steroid drops to reduce the inflammation and swelling so that the dog will be more comfortable until the infection gets under control.

Fungal Infections:

Fungus thrives in dark and damp conditions. Because the ear canal is dark and damp, some dogs may develop a chronic fungal infection. A fungal infection should NOT be treated with steroids, as it will make the infection worse. When a veterinarian treats an allergic dermatitis with steroids, it usually results in an overgrowth of fungus in the ear. The treatment for a fungal infection is keeping the ear very dry and perhaps administering a topical fungal medication. Usually keeping the ear DRY and acidic (a dilute solution of white vinegar and water at 50/50 is good for this) will clear up a fungal infection.

Allergies:

If you continue to have ear problems, consider the possibility of food allergies. Grain-free diets or changing the protein source can do wonders to clear up ear problems in dogs.

Some dogs have multiple skin allergies, allergic diarrhoea, flea allergies, and some even have frequent sneezing and scratching. This type of dog frequently also has a chronic ear problem. The ear leathers may be red and itchy. There may even be hives on the ears. If this is the case you need to find what your dog is allergic to, be it an environmental problem, or a food, the type of shampoo you are using on the dog, or a flea product. You may need the help of a veterinary dermatologist. If your dog has a topical allergy problem, you may not be able to clear up the irritated ear problem.

All dry preparations incur the risk of making 'cement' in the ear if there is a moist discharge. **Be very careful** to avoid this situation by using such agents very sparingly. If you have a moist discharge, then you need to go back to the instructions on mild infections and use the vinegar/water solution.

Elsie's Ear Powder instructions for use:

A little bit of powder goes a long way, either use the back of a teaspoon handle or an ear bud (q-tips) and place a small amount in the ear and shake it down into the ear hole, bigger ears will require a bit more.

In loving memory of Elsie Rose

<https://elsiesearpowder.com.au>

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