**Can You Talk into My Good Ear?**

Hello, it’s Shelby with Antrim Veterinary Hospital. I hope you all had a great summer! I’m sure we have all experienced an ear infection with our pet. Did you know the medical term for an ear infection is otitis? There are 3 different types of otitis, externa, media and interna. The most common type is externa which we will be talking about today.

Some breeds are more prone to ear infections but any breed at any age can develop one. The first sign your pet has an infection is shaking of the head and scratching the ears. They do this trying to get debris and fluid out of their ear. The ears may become red and inflamed, they may even develop and odor. Although your dog may not appear so, ear infections are painful.

The most common cause of ear infections is allergies. An infection may also be caused by a tumor or foreign body within the ear canal. You may also notice an infection after your pet has been bathed or gone swimming due to water getting into the canal and staying there. Routine ear cleaning may help reduce the chances of an ear infection but you want to use an ear cleaner that has a drying agent in it.

Dogs have a very long “L” shaped ear canal- only a small portion is visible. Your veterinarian will use an otoscope to look down into the canal of the ear. If they suspect an ear infection, they will then obtain an ear cytology. The veterinary technician will use a special stain to prepare the slide and then examine it under the microscope. This will show the organisms that are in the ear canal to determine if the pet has a yeast or bacterial infection. After the cytology is obtained it may be necessary for the veterinarian to clean the ears if debris blocking visualization of the drum. It’s necessary to visualize the drum because if the drum is ruptured there are certain medications we cannot use within the ear.

If your pet starts bothering their ears it is best to make an appointment immediately rather than waiting. The head shaking and scratching can cause broken vessels within the ear flap which is called an ear hematoma. This requires surgical repair. Also, if an ear infection is left untreated or the pet has multiple infections the infection can penetrate the ear drum and eventually cause permanent hearing loss. When this occurs, your pet is more at risk of developing otitis media or interna where the ear infection moves further into the ear canal. If you feel your pet might have an infection please call us for an appointment. 410-751-0091