



AURAL HAEMATOMA

What is a haematoma of the ear, and how does it occur?

An aural (ear) haematoma is a collection of blood or serum, and sometimes a blood clot within the pinna or earflap. This blood collects under the skin and causes the earflap to become thickened. The swelling may involve the entire earflap or it may involve only one area. Aural haematomas usually occur as a result of local irritation to some part of the ear. When something irritates the ear canal, the dog responds by scratching or shaking the head. Excessive shaking causes blood vessels to break, resulting in bleeding. Bleeding may also be introduced from a bite to the ear during play or otherwise. An understanding of the ear's anatomy makes the sequence of events more logical. The earflap is composed of a layer of skin on each side of a layer of cartilage. The cartilage gives the earflap its shape. Blood vessels go from side to side by passing through the cartilage. Violent shaking causes the vessels to break as the skin slides across the cartilage. Some dogs, especially Golden Retrievers, can get a spontaneous haematoma without a precipitating irritation. This may be treated differently.

How is it treated?

There are four steps in treatment.

1. The blood is removed from the earflap. This is accomplished by making an incision over the haematoma on the inside of the ear.
2. The space where the blood accumulated is obliterated. Since the skin over the haematoma has been pushed away from the cartilage, it must be reattached to it to prevent another haematoma from occurring. This is accomplished by a series of sutures that are passed through the earflap.
3. The cause of the problem is diagnosed and treated. If an infection is present, medication is dispensed to treat it. However, some dogs have no infection but have foreign material (a tick, piece of grass, etc.) lodged in the ear canal. If so, the foreign material is removed. It is also possible that a foreign body initiated the shaking but was later dislodged. If that occurs, and no infection is present, further treatment of the ear canal is not needed.

Will I need to bring my dog back for further treatment?

The sutures are generally removed in about 14 days. At that time, the haematoma is usually healed. If discharge occurs from the drainage hole before it closes, it should be cleaned off with warm salty water. If an infection was present, it will be necessary to recheck the ear canal to be sure that the infection is gone. Otherwise, another haematoma may occur.

Disclaimer: This information is of a general nature only, and must not be used as veterinary advice except where directed by your veterinarian. Hall Veterinary Surgery does not warrant the suitability of this information for specific cases. If your animal is unwell or you want to act on this information, please contact us on 6230 2223.