

Ear Mites



What are ear mites?

Ear mites are insects that live as parasites in the ears of some pets. A parasite is an organism that lives upon or within another living organism at whose expense it obtains nutrients and shelter. Ear mites are very tiny parasites that feed on blood, ear wax and skin oils. Ear mites usually spend their entire life cycle living in and around a pet's ear canal.

Is my pet at risk?

Ear mites can infect a pet of any age and are especially common in kittens and outdoor cats. Puppies and dogs are only occasionally infected. Ear mites are very contagious and are transmitted by physical contact with affected pets or the personal items of affected pets such as bedding.

Can I get ear mites from my pet?

Ear mites are not considered to be a disease which can be transmitted from pets to humans. Some people can develop skin rashes from the bites of ear mites, but the ear mite is unable to complete its life cycle on a person.

What are signs of ear mites in pets?

Intense irritation of the ears results in scratching, head shaking and pain. Ear mites cause an allergic reaction in your pet's ear that is very uncomfortable. Infection usually produces a characteristic dry, black ear discharge commonly said to resemble coffee grounds. Infected pets can develop secondary skin infections as a result of scratching.

How will the doctor diagnose ear mites in my pet?

Your doctor will perform a physical exam and thorough exam of the ear. An ear swab and microscopic exam

of the ear discharge may also be performed. Mites may be viewed through a microscope. Any secondary infections may need to be diagnosed separately and could involve additional testing.

How will the doctor treat my pet's ear mites?

There are several prescriptions available that can often treat ear mites in just one dose. Tell your doctor about all other pets in the family as they also might need to be treated. The products your doctor will dispense are safer and more effective than over the counter products and are usually easier to use.

How can I prevent ear mites in my pet?

Your doctor will decide what option is best for your pet. To prevent re-infection and protect other pets in the family, the pet's environment should be thoroughly cleaned and pet bedding should be washed or replaced. Vacuum thoroughly and throw the bag away. Your home can also be treated with an indoor fog or spray, but this is usually not necessary if all infected pets are properly treated. These pesticides can be purchased at local home stores. Check with your veterinarian and carefully read the instructions to ensure your entire family's safety if using these pesticides.

Keeping a close eye on your pet's ears will help you catch early changes that could mean an infection is brewing. Daily brushing is an excellent time to closely examine your pet. Being able to recognize what's normal with your pet is as important as recognizing what's abnormal. Wash your pet's bedding frequently. If possible, keep cats indoors. Studies show that indoor cats live longer, healthier lives, and have a decreased chance of encountering parasites such as ear mites.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about the health of your pet, please contact your Banfield hospital.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

