



# Navarro Small Animal Clinic

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## Ear Care For Your Pet

**By: Dr. Shana Bohac**

Although a dog's ears need to be regularly monitored for his entire life, a little basic maintenance is generally all that's required to keep them clean and healthy. Preventing an ear infection is much easier than treating one.

Because of the twisty, curvy design of a dog's inner ears, it's easy for parasites, bacteria and yeast to hide and thrive in them. This also means that any debris in the canal must work its way up to escape. Infections can result from trapped debris. Dogs with allergies are particularly vulnerable, as are those with floppy ears, like Cocker spaniels, basset hounds, and poodles.

Your dog's regular grooming/maintenance routine should include regular ear checks. This is especially important for dogs that produce excessive earwax or have a lot of inner-ear hair. If your dog's inner ears appear dirty, clean them with a cotton ball dampened with a solution formulated specifically for this purpose. Do not clean your dog's ears so frequently or deeply as to cause irritation, as this can lead to infection. Take care to not insert anything really deep into your dog's ear canal. A good rule of thumb is that as long as you can see the tip of the cotton swab, then you are safe. A controversial topic is what to do about all that hair in your dog's ear canals. If your dog sprouts hair from his ear canal, you have two options. You or your groomer may have to tweeze it out every few weeks to prevent problematic mats and tangles from forming. The problem with this choice is that it creates trauma and irritation which can lead to infection. You could also leave the hair and just clean the ears more frequently and diligently. If you're not careful, frequent bathing and swimming can lead to irritation and infection. To prevent this from happening, place cotton in your dog's ears before baths, and be sure to dry ears as thoroughly as you safely can after all water sports and activities. If your dog is prone to ear infections, you might want to pour a tiny amount of an ear drying solution made for dogs into ear canals to help evaporate any water trapped inside. These ear washes are available at better pet supply stores or at your veterinarian's office.

Contact your veterinarian for an appointment if you notice any of the following symptoms affecting your dog's ears: ear discharge, scratching, severe odors, redness, swelling, crusty skin, and hair loss around the ears. These are all signs that a bacterial or yeast infection may be going on.

Please also be aware that brown or black ear wax—and dry, dark wax resembling coffee grounds—are classic indicators of microscopic ear mites or infection, so please don't delay bringing a goeey-eared pooch in for a checkup.