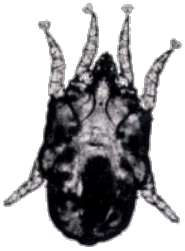




Ear Mites



Most people have heard of ear mites and know they are a relatively common parasite of dogs and cats. There is, unfortunately, a tendency in the general public to see an inflamed ear with discharge on their pet and assume it is an ear mite infection, often leading to weeks of inappropriate treatment with over-the-counter remedies. It is important to distinguish an ear infected with yeast or bacteria from one infected with mites.

WHAT ARE EAR MITES?

Ear mites are tiny infectious organisms resembling microscopic ticks. The mite can just barely be seen as a small white dot with the naked eye but usually must be detected by examination of a sample of ear wax under a microscope. Infection usually produces a characteristic dry black ear discharge commonly said to resemble coffee grounds. Because of the classical appearance of this discharge, infection is often diagnosed based on the presence of such discharge though without visual confirmation of the mite under the microscope, it is possible to be led astray. The discharge is composed of ear wax, blood, inflammatory biochemicals, and ear mites themselves.

THE BIZARRE EAR MITE LIFE CYCLE

The mite lives on the surface of the ear canal skin, though sometimes migrates out onto the face and head of its host. Eggs are laid and hatch after 4 days of incubation. The larva hatches from the egg, feeds on ear wax and skin oils for about a week and then molts into a “protonymph,” which in turn molts into a “deutonymph.” The deutonymph mates with the adult male. What seems especially bizarre to us mammals, is the fact that the deutonymph has not yet developed a gender at the time it mates with the adult male.

After mating, the deutonymph molts into either an adult male or an adult female. If she becomes a female, she will be gravid with eggs as a result of the mating. If he develops into a male, there are no consequences to the mating and he is ready to mate with deutonymphs of his own choosing. The adult mite lives approximately two months happily eating ear wax and skin oils. The life cycle (the time it takes for an egg to develop into an adult mite ready for parenthood) requires 3 weeks.

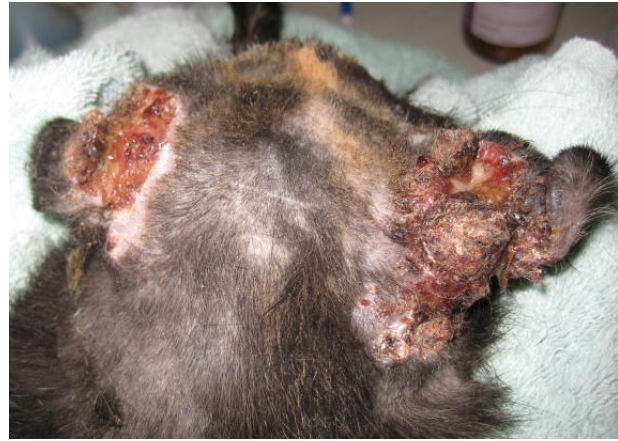
Most ear mite cases are found in cats. Dogs can be infected as well but, since dogs more commonly get ear infections of other types, ear infections in dogs rarely involve mites.

HOW DID MY PET GET EAR MITES?

Ear mites readily transmit from host to host by physical contact. Ear mites came from some other animal with whom your pet has been socializing. Because mites are easily transmissible by physical contact, treatment for mites often must include all household pets.

WHAT HARM COMES FROM EAR MITE INFECTION?

The presence of the mites is very inflammatory and can generate very irritating ear infections. Skin disease can also result from infection by the ear mite.



IS THIS CONTAGIOUS TO ME?

Ear mite infection is certainly contagious among cats and dogs. Typically, the victim is an outdoor cat. Humans have been reported to develop skin rashes rarely; in general, we may consider that a human pet owner is extremely unlikely to experience any symptoms when their pet is infected with ear mites.

HOW DO I GET RID OF EAR MITES?

There are currently several prescription products available that reliably eradicate an ear mite infection with one single use, though a thorough ear cleaning is still needed to remove the wax and debris from the ear. We use Milbemite -a single dose should be all that is needed to clear the infection.

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